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# SPEECHES AND PAPERS

ON

## Indian Questions,

1891 and 1902

BY

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE.



THE second series of the Speeches and Papers of Mr. R. C. Dutt is published with his permission. They contain his important speeches made before the Fabian Society of London, and at Liverpool and Glasgow, on the Economic Causes of Indian Famines ; his papers on Indian Agriculture and Indian Manufactures ; and his four Replies to Lord Curzon's recent Resolution on the Indian Land Revenue. Other important speeches, delivered in 1901 and 1902, have also been included.

THE PUBLISHER.



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SPEECHES AND PAPERS  
ON  
INDIAN QUESTIONS.

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I. THE INDIAN LAND QUESTION.

[*Reprinted from the Imperial and Colonial Magazine*  
*February 1901.*]

I.

IN the latter half of the 18th century, a variety of administrative problems presented themselves to the new rulers of India, but none of them was so deeply interesting or presented itself in such varied forms as the Land Question. And the servants of the East India Company, familiar only with the English system of landlords, farmers, and labourers, were fairly puzzled when Zemindars and Polygars, Village-Communities and Peasant-proprietors, appeared before their astonished eyes with all their archaic customs and ancient rights.

The Province of Bengal, the first great acquisition of the East India Company, presented the problem in its simplest form. The country was parcelled out into great estates, owned by hereditary Zemindars, who had under the Mahomedan *regime* virtually ruled their own

estates, encouraged literature and arts in their courts, and often commanded troops for the Imperial service. It was obvious therefore, that any revenue settlement of Bengal, based on the ancient institutions of that land, must be a settlement with Zemindars.

For a time, however, the administration of the Province was in disorder. The battle of Plassy was won in 1757, and the Company assumed the direct administration of Bengal in 1765, but the Company's servants, bent on making large fortunes for themselves, endeavoured to take over the inland trade of the country into their own hands, and drove the traders of the country to despair. Farmers of the land-revenue were also sent to the different districts where they made collections from zemindars or tenants often by coercion, and the agriculturists were grievously oppressed. A great famine, —the greatest that is recorded in the history of India, —then occurred in 1770-71, and is estimated to have swept away one-third of the population of that rich and fertile Province.

Warren Hastings was then appointed Governor of Bengal in 1772, and became Governor-General in 1774 ; and the Land Question naturally came under his consideration. Hastings himself, trained in the old methods, made the harsh and unwise proposal that the estates of Bengal should be sold by public auction or farmed out on leases and that settlements should be made with the purchasers or lessees for life. A juster and a more humane view of the situation was taken by a large-minded statesman, known to English readers as

the writer of the "Letters of Junius." In one of the ablest minutes ever recorded in India, Philip Francis, then a member of the Governor General's Council, dwelt on the calamities through which Bengal had passed since the British Conquest, and recommended that a permanent settlement should be made with the Zemindars. "If there be any hidden wealth still existing," he wrote, "it will be brought forth and employed in improving the land, because the proprietor will be satisfied he is labouring for himself."

When these varied proposals came before the Court of Directors in London, the Directors were fairly puzzled by the strangeness of the problem and the magnitude of the issues involved ; and following a policy of drift peculiarly British, they allowed the problem time to ripen towards its own solution. On the Christmas Eve of 1776 the Directors wrote to India that "having considered the different circumstances of letting the land on leases for lives, or in perpetuity, we do not for many weighty reasons, think it at present advisable to adopt either of these modes."

For nine years more, Warren Hastings administered the affairs of India, and the Land Question in Bengal ripened towards a solution. The short leases and the prompt demands of Hastings caused much suffering to the people ; ancient houses which had virtually ruled large districts in Bengal were swept away ; money-lenders and auction-purchasers came in their place as new landlords ; and much land went out of cultivation. When, at last, Lord Cornwallis succeeded Warren

Hastings as Governor General, he wrote, "I may safely assert that one-third of the Company's territory in Hindustan is now a jungle, inhabited only by wild beasts." With characteristic energy and benevolence Lord Cornwallis made a ten-year's settlement with the landlords of Bengal; and within a few years he made that settlement permanent in 1793. The area of cultivation has vastly extended since that date, and the additional profit has remained in the country, and promoted the prosperity of the agricultural classes.

But Lord Cornwallis' work was only a partial solution of the great question. He assured the Zemindars of Bengal against any increase of the State-demand; he also expressly retained for the State the power to protect the cultivators against undue demands on the part of Zemindars; but this power was not exercised for a long time. Lord Cornwallis has been blamed for thus leaving the actual cultivators unprotected for a long time; but the case of Ireland shows that effective legislation for the protection of tenants is not easy. It is enough to add that such legislation was undertaken in Bengal long before it was thought of in Ireland; that Lord Canning's Bengal Rent Act of 1859 was a thorough and effective measure which received the attention of Mr. Gladstone when he framed his Land Bill for Ireland in 1869; and that Lord Canning's Act has been succeeded by the Bengal Rent Acts of 1868 and 1885 which now effectually protect the cultivators of Bengal against all unjust enhancements and ejectments by landlords. It is thus after the labour of a century that

British administrators have solved in a satisfactory manner the great Land Question in Bengal, *firstly*, by extending protection to Zemindars by the Regulation of 1793, and *secondly*, by extending protection to actual cultivators by the Rent Acts of 1859, 1868 and 1885. The consequence is that Bengal cultivators at the present time are more prosperous, more self-relying, and more safe against the worst effects of famine, than the cultivators of any other Province in India.

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## II.

Madras was the next territorial acquisition of the East India Company. Large slices of the dominions of Mysore were acquired by the British after the wars of 1792 and 1799, and the whole of the Karnatic was taken over in 1801. The Land Question in these territories presented itself in a greater variety of forms than in Bengal; and while they puzzled the servants of the Company, they would have afforded the most interesting materials for study to thoughtful enquirers like Sismondi or Mill, like Lavelaye or Sumner Maine. For, instead of one predominating system as in Bengal, there were various systems flourishing side by side in Madras, and these may be grouped under three great classes.

(1) The Zemindars of the Northern Circars, the Polygars of the South, and the Hill Rajas of the backward tracts, were great landlords, exercising at the same time those administrative powers within their estates

which belonged in a greater or a less degree to all territorial and military lords in olden times.

(2) The Mirasi villages of the Karnatic were Village-Communities, holding the village lands in common, partitioning them among the tenants from time to time, and paying their quota of revenue to the State, like self-contained and self-governing little republics.

(3) In tracts where fighting Polygars had not extended their power, and the Mirasi Village-Communities had not grown up, Peasant-proprietors held and tilled their own soil, and paid revenue direct to the Government.

Which of these systems was the original institution of the country? Which of them should be fostered under the British rule? The Polygars being strong military chiefs were the first to be crushed. The Nawab of the Karnatic, with the help of his British allies, rooted out these local chiefs who had ruled their estates and protected their people through centuries of disorder in Southern India. The Court of Directors shed a pious tear for them. They wrote that "the native princes called Polygars should not be extirpated," that "it was repugnant to humanity to force them to such dreadful extremities." But the Governor of Madras and the Nawab of the Karnatic could afford to disregard these pious wishes; and later on, the Court of Directors reconciled themselves to what had been done! "We entreat your Excellency," they wrote to the Governor of Madras, "to make the manufacturers the object of your tenderest care; particularly when you root out the Polygars,

you do not deprive the weavers of the protection they enjoyed under them." The Nawab of the Karnatic went on merrily, with the aid of his British allies, to root out the Polygars who were strong feudatory chiefs ; but the turn of the Karnatic itself came next. On the death of the Nawab, the whole of the Karnatic largely freed from Polygars, was added to the British dominions, after certain formalities, in 1801.

The Land Question was thus brought one step nearer its solution, but was not yet solved. In the Northern Circars and in other places, where there were large Zemindars, a permanent settlement had been made with them under the orders of Lord Cornwallis. What was to be done where there were no Zemindars ? Colonel Read and Thomas Munro had made some settlements direct with the Ryots or cultivators, and this form of settlement is called Ryotwari Settlement. The Madras Board of Revenue, on the other hand, pressed for a settlement with the Mirasi Village-Communities which they represented as the original and ancient institution of the land. The official records of Indian Administration do not contain a more interesting controversy than this memorable discussion between the partisans or Peasant-proprietors and the partisans of Village-Communities in Southern India.

Sir Thomas Munro triumphed in the end. He gave his evidence with remarkable clearness, force, and knowledge of details, before the Commons' Committee which was enquiring into the affairs of the East India Company in 1813 ; and he obtained the

orders of the Court of Directors for the introduction of the Ryotwari system in Madras. Except in estates where a permanent settlement has been made with Zemindars, settlement with the cultivators direct is the prevailing system in Madras at the present time. Village-Communities have been swept away, even like the Polygars of old.

But the great Land Problem in Madras still remains unsolved. Sir Thomas Murno contemplated a *permanent settlement* with the cultivators in Madras, as Lord Cornwallis had made a *permanent settlement* with the Zemindars in Bengal. His desire was that the cultivators of Madras should have their holdings as "a permanent hereditary property" of which "the assessment must be fixed." Down to 1862 the Madras Government believed and declared that "the fundamental principle of the Ryotwari system is that the Government demand on land is fixed for ever." \* But within the last forty years the Madras Government has receded from their former position.

The Government demand is not "fixed for ever," but is enhanced at each recurring settlement. The Government claim of one-half the net produce of the soil, after deducting the cost of cultivation, is enforced on the basis of estimates which can never be accurate. The Government rule of fixing one-third the gross produce of the soil as the maximum of the revenue-demand is oppressive and harsh. The cultivators of Madras have no clear and adequate protection against

\* Letter of the Madras Government to the Government of India No. 241 dated 8th February 1862.

the State-landlord,\* as the cultivators of Bengal have against the private landlord. 11,749 cultivators were ejected from their holdings in Madras last year for inability to pay the Government demand; 60,896 acres were sold for arrears of revenue; one-half of this found no purchasers in the market and was bought up by the Government itself at a nominal value! Six millions of acres of cultivable land remain uncultivated under the present system of heavy assesment!

When the Marquis of Ripon went out to India as Viceroy in 1880, he endeavoured to remedy this state of things. With a commendable moderation and good sense he sought to effect a compromise between the principle that the State-demand should be fixed for ever, and the principle that the State-demand should be virtually unrestricted. He left a door open for the future increase of the land revenue by claiming such increase when the prices of the produce rose. And he extended protection to the cultivators by declaring that no increase would be demanded in the future except on the ground of such a rise in prices. It was an equitable rule and a reasonable compromise, and would have settled the Land Question in Madras. But the Secretary of State for India took it upon himself to set aside this reasonable compromise in 1885, in order to keep the Government-demand absolutely unrestricted. And thus it happens that the Land Question remains

\* I have used the word "State-landlord" in a loose way. Strictly speaking the cultivators themselves are recognised as the proprietors of their holdings, and the State only claims a *revenue* from them, not *rent*.

unsolved in Madras, and the agricultural population remain indebted, impoverished, and subject to famines, after a century of British rule.

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### III.

The territory now forming the Bombay Presidency was acquired by the British later than Bengal and Madras. The last of the Mahratta Peshwas was set aside in 1817, and his dominions were annexed in that year ; and the Land Question, which is the most vital question in every part of India, immediately came for consideration.

The Deccan had a well defined land-system of its own under the Mahrattas ; the Village-Community-system was better organized and more general in the Deccan than in Madras. Mountstuart Elphinstone, who was the first Governor of the Bombay Presidency, was a kindly and sympathetic administrator, and sought to preserve what was good and commendable in old Hindu institutions. "I am not democratic enough," he wrote in 1822, "to insist on the Ryotwari system. I think the aristocracy of the country where it consists of heads of villages or heads of Zemindaris should be kept up."

But Mountstuart Elphinstone endeavoured in vain. When he left India, the Village-Community-system was disfavoured, and the Ryotwari system was favoured ; and one of the ablest and shrewdest of the Directors of the East India Company admitted ;—"It cannot be con-

cealed or denied, I think, that the object of this (Ryotwari) system is to obtain for Government the utmost that the land will yield in the shape of rent." \* The claims of the Government-revenue superseded all other claims in India ; the old village institutions were crushed or swept away in the Deccan ; the Ryotwari system or settlement with each individual cultivators was introduced as in Madras.

Settlements for thirty years have been made in Bombay in 1836, in 1866 and in 1896, each settlement showing an enhancement of the Government demand by over thirty per cent. But a proper solution of the Land Question, conferring clear, adequate and well-defined rights to the cultivators of the soil, has not been arrived at, because the State-landlord is unwilling to place definite limits to its powers. The State-landlord is also the Legislative power ; and it legislated in 1876 that the High Court of Bombay and the Civil Courts of that Province should have no jurisdiction over its actions in the revenue department. The consequence may be imagined ; and what the late Sir William Hunter said in 1879 from his place in the Viceroy's Council is true to this day that "the Government assessment does not leave enough food to the cultivator to support himself and his family throughout the year." In the present year of distress and famine in Western India, Lord Curzon has declared that "the weakness and incapacity for resistance of the people took the local Government

\* HENRY ST. JOHN TUCKER: *Memorials of Indian Government*, London 1853, p. 113.

by surprise." That surprise is removed by a reference to the past revenue-history of the Province.

The solution that is needed in Bombay is the same that is needed in Madras. We cannot reverse the Ryotwari system after it has been established as the prevailing system in the two Provinces for generations ; but we can work the system with moderation and due care. The rule laid down in 1864 by Sir Charles Wood, then Secretary of State for India, that the Government revenue should generally be limited to one-half the customary rents, should find a place in the fiscal laws of India. The rule laid down by the Marquis of Ripon in 1882, to prevent enhancements except on the equitable ground of a rise in prices, should now obtain the sanction of the present Secretary of State. And a reference should be allowed to impartial Courts of Justice against mistakes made by Settlement and Revenue Officers in Madras and in Bombay.

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#### IV.

Northern India came under British Rule at various dates. Portions of Oudh were ceded to the British in 1801, and Delhi and Agra and other districts were conquered in 1803. The Punjab was annexed after the Sikh wars of 1847 and 1849, and the whole of Oudh was annexed in 1856.

Lord Cornwallis's successful permanent settlement of the land revenues in Bengal was extended to Benares, and proposed to be extended to other parts of Northern

India ; and proclamations were made and pledges were given to the people. But after the death of Lord Cornwallis, the desire to redeem these pledges gradually lost its force. An able and exhaustive report submitted by Holt Mackenzie generally brought to the light the fact that Village-Communities were still in a fairly working order in Northern India ; it was decided to make settlements with these Village-Communities as well as with landlords of large estates ; and it was also decided unfortunately to make these settlements temporary and not permanent. Regulation VII. of 1822 was accordingly passed into law.

On the early mistakes of the Company's Government in the revenue-administration of Northern India it is not necessary for us to dwell ; the Company's servants actually endeavoured to realize over 80 per cent., of the rental as the Government demand. A great deal of suffering and distress was caused to the people, and it has been stated that the hand of the Company's tax-gatherer was felt heavier by the agricultural population than even the occasional devastations of Afghan and Mahratta free-booters of the previous times.

A careful enquirer and a considerate administrator now appeared on the scene, Lieutenant-General Briggs, who had served under Mountstuart Elphinstone in the last Mahratta war, and had settled large districts, produced his great work on the land-systems of India in 1830. And he proved,

(1) that the integrity of private property in land had been recognized in every village in India ;

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(1) that the integrity of private property in land had been recognized in every village in India ;

(2) that the Government had no right to the land but only to a share in its produce, i e., a land tax ;

(3) that that share was limited by Hindu and Mahomedan law and could not be arbitrarily fixed ;

(4) that the British Empire could be made durable only if based on the broad basis of native institutions.

A better and a more sympathetic administrator never went out to India than Lord William Bentinck who was then the Governor General, and he welcomed General Briggs' work as a help to his administration. The famous Regulation of 1833 was passed after consultation with General Briggs ; the revenue-demand was reduced to two-thirds the rental ; and new settlements were made between 1833 and 1849. The last great work of the Company's servants was to reduce the land-revenue still further to one-half the rental, by the Saharanpur rules of 1855, and this is the recognized rule in Northern India to the present day.

The rule of the East India Company came to an end after the Indian Mutiny of 1857, and a great famine swept over Northern India in the early years of the administration of the Crown. Lord Canning, the first and greatest Viceroy of India under the Crown, sought to pass a remedial measure which would permanently improve the condition of the agricultural classes, which would give rise to a substantial middle class, and which would lead to some accumulation of capital among the impoverished population. Looking at the prosperous condition of Bengal under the Permanent Settlement, and after a careful enquiry into other parts of India,

Lord Canning recommended the extension of a Permanent Settlement to all the Provinces of India.

Sir Charles Wood was then Secretary of State for India ; and in his memorable Despatch of the 5th July 1862 he approved of Lord Canning's proposal as "a measure dictated by sound policy, and calculated to accelerate the development of resources of India, and to ensure, in the highest degree, the welfare and contentment of all classes of Her Majesty's subjects in that country." Lord Lawrence thoroughly supported the proposal in his Minute of the 5th March 1864 ; and Sir Stafford Northcote, who was Secretary of State for India in 1867, gave it his sanction in his letter of the 23rd March 1867 "in consideration of the great importance of connecting the interests of the proprietors of the land with the stability of the British Government."

It is a melancholy truth that the very peacefulness and loyalty of the people of India have weakened, instead of strengthening, this benevolent desire on the part of their rulers. The generation of Canning and Lawrence, of Sir Charles Wood and Sir Stafford Northcote passed away, and after a period of uninterrupted peace in India the succeeding generation of statesmen no longer thought it necessary to sacrifice a prospective rise in the land revenue to promote the welfare and contentment of the people, or to connect the interests of the proprietors of the soil with the stability of the British Rule. The people of India lost the chance of an extension of the Permanent Settlement by their silent submission, and the proposal of Lord Canning and Lord Lawrence was

finally rejected by a new Secretary of State for India on the 28th March 1883.

The state of things in Northern India therefore is this. The old Village-Communities have gradually and slowly approximated to a system of landlords and tenants. The revenue demand of the State is about half the rental, and is re-settled every thirty years. A great many local cesses, assessed on the rental, have been added to the land-revenue.

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## V.

It is unnecessary to prolong this article by any lengthy examination of the state of things in the Central Provinces of India. Saugor and the Narbadda Territories came under British administration in 1818, and the Nagpur State was annexed in 1853; and all these tracts were consolidated into one great Province, and called the Central Provinces of India in 1861. Sir Richard Temple's administration of this great Province from 1862 to 1866 is still remembered by the people of the Province with gratitude; the thirty years' settlement commenced in 1863 was conducted on liberal principles; the Malguzars of Revenue-payers were recognized as proprietors; and the rule of demanding one-half the rental as revenue was recognized in principle, though it was unfortunately evaded in practice.

In a country like India, where the people have no voice or share in the control of the work of administration, the principles of administration are liable to change

from year to year according to the fancies of individual administrators. The history of modern India presents us with no more painful illustration of this truth than the second land-revenue settlement of the Central Provinces effected within the last decade. The Chief Commissioner who ruled the Central Provinces in 1887 considered that the rule of demanding half the rental from the landlords, as the Government revenue, was too liberal to the landlords ! And that reasonable and moderate rule, arrived at after a century of bitter and painful experiments, arrived at on the experience of administrators like Lord Dalhousie, Lord Canning and Sir Richard Temple, was abrogated for the Central Provinces in 1888, without discussion in Council, without consultation with the people ! Settlements have now been made in the Central Provinces in which something like 60 per cent of the rental plus  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent as local cesses have been demanded from the landlords as revenue ; and the period of settlement has also been cut down from 30 to 20 years ! These fatal blunders have deepened the effects of the famines of 1897 and 1900 in the Central Provinces, and have perhaps added to the loss of lives by tens of thousands.

Such, briefly, has been the history of Land Administration in the five great Provinces of India. Generally speaking, the land revenue is paid by landlords in Northern India, Bengal, and the Central Provinces ; while it is paid direct by the cultivators of the soil in Madras and Bombay. To this difference in systems no objection is taken ; but the people of India desire that

reasonable, equitable, and intelligible limits to the State-demand should be framed. There is one clear and intelligible limit which is recognized in theory by the State itself, and which applies to all Provinces of India ; and that limit is : *The Land Tax shall not exceed one-half the rental or one-half the economic rent.* This rule was recognized for Northern India by Lord Dalhousie's Saharanpur Rules of 1855 ; and it was recognized for Southern India by Sir Charles Wood's Despatch of 1864. Let this rule be honestly adhered to in practice.

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## II. INDIA AND THE NATIONAL LIBERAL FEDERATION.

*Speech at the Conference of the Committee of the National  
Liberal Federation at Rugby on February, 27, 1901.  
Reprinted from "India."*

THE meeting of the Delegates at Rugby was the largest of such meetings since the establishment of the Federation, and the large hall was inconveniently crowded. The South African discussions were necessarily prolonged, and it was after five o'clock when Mr. Romesh Dutt, who attended as a delegate from Lewisham, was able to move his resolution. It ran thus :

"That this meeting deplores the succession of severe famines which have caused the deaths of millions of people in India in recent years, and considers it necessary to prevent the recurrence of such severe calamities by moderating the Land Tax, extending irrigation works, and relieving as far as possible the annual burdensome drain on the financial resources of India which impoverishes the people of that country."

In moving this resolution, Mr. DUTT said that although the subjects which had been discussed by the meeting that afternoon were of the gravest importance, there was none among them which was of a higher importance in the interests of the British Empire than

that which formed the subject of his resolution. They had to deplore the deaths of twenty or thirty thousand Englishmen in the South African War ; but the loss of lives from the present famine in India could scarcely be much under a million ; while the loss of lives from the succession of famines which had occurred in India within the present generation, or rather within the forty-two years since India had passed under the direct administration of the Crown, could scarcely be less than the entire population of England. English Liberals would ask themselves the cause of these disastrous and frequent famines in a time of profound and uninterrupted peace within the natural frontiers of India. India at present was not a great manufacturing country, nor a great commercial country, but a great agricultural country ; and four-fifths of the vast population of India depended upon agriculture. If the Government demand from the produce of the soil was moderate, and placed within definite and intelligible limits, the people could be prosperous. But the Government demand was being increased at each recurring settlement every twenty or thirty years ; the people could save nothing ; and every year of drought was a year of famine. After the great famine of 1860, Lord Canning, then Viceroy of India, had recommended that limits should be placed on the Government demand ; and Lord Lawrence, who succeeded as Viceroy of India a few years after, had supported this recommendation ; but, nevertheless it was rejected by the India Office in London. The Marquis of Ripon who was Viceroy of India from

1880 to 1884 had recommended certain other limitations to the Government demand; but even his very moderate recommendation had been rejected by the India Office in London. Thus it happened that the agricultural people of India were in a state of chronic poverty and indebtedness and would continue to be subject to repeated and fatal famines, till the Land Tax was moderated and strictly limited. His second recommendation was the extension of irrigation works. On this point there was no difference of opinion, because irrigation works—tanks as well as canals—were the only possible means of saving crops in years of drought. His last recommendation was to decrease as far as possible the annual drain from India. While taxation had increased both in England and in India, there was an essential difference between the two countries. In England, the proceeds of taxation were spent in the country, and thus flowed back to the people in one shape or another to fructify their industries and help their trade. In India, an amount exceeding one half of the net revenues was annually taken away from the country, and thus rendered the people hopelessly poor. It was a drain unexampled in any country on earth at the present day; and if England herself had to send out one half of her annual revenues to be spent annually in Germany or France or Russia, there would be famines in England before long. Therefore he proposed that this annual drain should be reduced, as far as possible, from year to year, by the employment of the people of India in the administration of their own country, and by the,

cost of the Imperial Army in India being shared to some extent by England herself.

Miss ALISON GARLAND rose to second the Resolution and was received with cheers. She said that she had probably been asked to second it because she had been to India in 1899-1900, and had visited several famine centres, and knew what the Indian famine meant. She depicted in vivid colours the scenes she had witnessed, and concluded her description by stating that in the midst of these horrors the Government had refused to make a Parliamentary grant to India—not because the British nation were averse to such a grant, not because such a grant was not needed, but because the Indian Government and the India Office did not ask for it. The Indian Government did not ask for it because they knew that a Parliamentary grant would be followed by an inconvenient Parliamentary enquiry.

When the chairman was about to put the Resolution to the vote, one delegate rose to oppose it. He said he had been in India and had seen two famines, and he was opposed to the Resolution. The remedies suggested by the mover would not avert famines in India, for when the annual rains failed, and the crops of the two hundred million people of India failed, nothing could avert a famine. He proposed therefore that this meeting should not pass the Resolution in a hurry.

COLONEL HANNA who was in the gallery then rose to speak; and though it was getting late, his venerable appearance, his great earnestness, and his known mastery of Indian facts, ensured him a patient and respectful

hearing. He said there was no such thing as the total failure of the crops in India. When crops failed in one Province there were always ample harvests in others. There always was a sufficient supply of food for the people of India. It was not the want of food supply, but it was the want of money to buy food, which caused famines in localities where the crops failed. He therefore thought that famines could be averted by improving the condition of the people. But the Government of India spent money unwisely in frontier wars, and the total outlay of such frontier wars came to eighty millions of English money. Colonel Hanna therefore supported the Resolution.

The Resolution being put to the vote was carried almost unanimously, only one or two hands being raised against it. This concluded the business of the meeting.

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### III. SOCIAL PROGRESS IN INDIA.

*[Speech delivered at the Annual Meeting of the National Indian Association, on March, 25, 1901.]*

MR. DUTT said: The Resolution which I have the honour to second has been explained by Sir Roper Lethbridge, and I have very little to add to what he has said, except that as an Indian myself, I feel great pleasure in seconding it. The Resolution is for making increased efforts in support of the Association's funds with the object of promoting female education in India. It is well known—speaking at least for the part of India from which I come, and with which I am most familiar—that for the last thirty or forty years or more, a great deal has been done by the people of India themselves in the cause of social progress and of female education. A great deal has been done, not ostentatiously, but by quiet work at home, to help the cause of social progress; and anything like a lasting and abiding improvement in the country must be done in the future, as has been done in the past, by the people themselves. (Hear, hear). I think many of the gentlemen present here, who have passed a great many years of their lives in India, like my friend Sir Charles Stevens who has moved the first Resolution, are familiar with the names of prominent Indian gentlemen who devoted their lives to the cause of education and of social reform. I need

only mention the names of Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and Keshab Chandra Sen of Bengal, and of Justice Ranade of Bombay whose recent death has filled the people of India with sorrow. They were prominent men in India who, in spite of various duties which they had to perform, devoted a great part of their time to the cause of social progress and social reform, and were careful to adopt methods which were consistent with our Eastern life, because they knew that all reforms in order to be abiding, must be consistent with our Eastern customs and life. (Hear, hear.) 'This is a point, ladies and gentlemen, which we should always remember—we who try to work in the cause of social reform. The people of India gratefully accept help from all true friends in the cause of reform; they avail themselves of the schools and teachers you provide; they benefit by your sympathy and your support; but nevertheless all abiding reforms must be worked out by themselves, consistently with the life they live. It is not desirable and it is not possible, to Europeanise Indian life. (Applause.) The people of India are well able to judge for themselves what is best for themselves, and Indian life and Hindu life has always proved itself capable of assimilating what is good for itself. It is because we have been able to assimilate all needful reforms from generation to generation and from age to age, that our ancient Hindu life still exists in India when so many phases of ancient life have passed away in other countries like Rome and Greece, like Persia, Egypt and Babylon. Therefore, Sir, our best helpers and our truest friends

are those who, while they offer us their help and their sympathy, can at the same time sympathise with Eastern life and Eastern institutions. And it is because this Association is trying to co-operate with our own endeavours, to help us where we are in need of help, to provide teachers and schools for the education of our wives, sisters, and daughters, that we gratefully accept its sympathy, its services, and its help. And I have great pleasure, Sir, in seconding this Resolution, because the truest progress that we can make, and the truest line upon which we can make that progress, is the extension of female education in India. It is necessary that our women should be familiar with modern institutions, with modern knowledge, and with modern history ; a sound education like this is needed to smoothen the path of our future progress.

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#### IV. THE LAND TAX, RAILWAYS AND IRRIGATION.

*Speech delivered at a Conference of Indians in the  
Westminster Town Hall on May, 24, 1901.*

• MR. ROMESH DUTT moved the following Resolution :

"In view of the frequent and recurring famines which have desolated India in recent years, and the extreme poverty of the agricultural population, it is desirable that the Land Tax of India should be moderated and placed within fixed limits, and that extensive irrigation works—canals, tanks, and wells,—should be undertaken for the protection of crops in years of drought."

Mr. Dutt said : The Resolution which I have the honour to move is, properly speaking, a supplement to the Resolution which you, Mr. Chairman, have moved, and which has just been passed. You, Sir, have raised your voice to-day, as you have raised it in this country for the last forty years, against that perpetual Economic Drain which has impoverished the people of India, against that annual flow of a large portion of the Indian revenue out of India ; I desire to show how<sup>1</sup> a large portion of this revenue is raised in India from the poorest of the poor, from the agriculturists and tillers of the soil.<sup>1</sup> It will thus appear, Sir, that we are not speaking of two different questions, but only of two aspects of the same question ; we are not asking for

two different reforms—we are demanding the same reform, shewing its need from outside and from inside. For my own opinion is that 'the annual Economic Drain will never be reduced until the Land Tax is moderated ; and the Land Tax will never be moderated until the Economic Drain is reduced.'

Sir, we stand to-day face to face with the appalling fact that famines and deaths by starvation have almost become chronic in India, after a hundred and fifty years of British Rule.

I am old enough, Sir, to remember the last years of the rule of the East India Company ; and I distinctly remember the day when, '43 years ago, it was proclaimed in every town and village of India, that the East India Company was abolished, and the empire had passed under the direct administration of the Crown.' During these 43 years we have enjoyed the blessings of peace, undisturbed by a single war within the natural frontiers of India. There has not been the slightest ripple of disturbance among the loyal population of that country. But peace has not brought with it prosperity to the people. On the contrary, the people of India are becoming more impoverished and resourceless from year to year, and famines and deaths are becoming more frequent and fatal. 'There have been 11 famines within these 43 years, and the deaths from these famines, by the most moderate computation exceed 20 millions.' It is an astonishing and appalling fact, not seen in the present day in any other civilised country on earth.

<sup>1</sup> The causes of these famines were not unknown to first Viceroys of India under the Crown. Lord Canning, who saved India during the dark days of the Indian Mutiny, tried also to save the country from the greater calamities of famines. He saw that our nation was a nation of agriculturists; he saw that in Provinces where the Land Tax was permanently settled, the agriculturists were prosperous; and he recommended that the Land Tax should be permanently settled all over India. He was succeeded after the interval of a few years by Lord Lawrence, another of the great saviors of India during the Mutiny, and Lord Lawrence also strongly recommended that the Land Tax should be permanently fixed all over India in order to give the agricultural people of India some means of saving in good years against droughts and failures of harvest in bad years.

These proposals came for consideration before two Secretaries of State. One of them Sir Charles Wood was a Liberal, and another, Sir Stafford Northcote was a Conservative, but they agreed in the cardinal maxim that India should be ruled for the good of the people of India.<sup>1</sup> Permit me to read one or two passages from the memorable despatches of Sir Charles Wood and of Sir Stafford Northcote in which both of them approved the proposal of permanently fixing the land-revenue of India.<sup>1</sup> [Passages read.]

These were the views of statesmen who ruled India during the first decade after the Mutiny, men who felt their own responsibility and who sympathised

with the people of India. But that generation passed away ; a less sympathetic school of statesmen were bent on eternally increasing the revenue derived from the soil ; and the benevolent proposal of limiting the land-tax for the good of the people of India was finally rejected by the India Office in 1883—over twenty years after the death of Lord Canning. 5741

Nevertheless all hope was not yet lost. A worthy successor of Lord Canning, the present Marquis of Ripon, was the Viceroy of India in 1883, and he suggested some very moderate limits to the enhancement of the Land Tax, limits which were accepted by the Government of Madras and I believe, the Government of Bombay. But Lord Ripon left India in 1884, and his proposals were rejected by the India Office in 1885. The result is that except in Provinces where it was already permanently settled, the Land Tax is being continuously raised at recurring settlements, it hangs like the sword of Damocles over the heads of Indian cultivators, it takes away the motive for permanent improvements, it paralyses agriculture, and it is accountable for the worst horrors of the succession of famines which have desolated India during these recent years.

I therefore move, Sir, that the Land Tax of India be moderated and fixed in the lines laid down by Lords Canning and Lawrence, or in those laid down by the Marquis of Ripon.

I now come, Sir, to the second part of my Resolution which concerns Irrigation works, and that will

not detain me long. (The necessity of Irrigation works in years of droughts to save crops is universally admitted ; but it is stated that it is not possible to construct canals on high table lands and hilly tracts. My answer to this is that where canals cannot be constructed wells and tanks can be constructed ; and such tanks made by old Hindu and Mahomedan rulers still exist and irrigate hundreds of square miles.

What we want is a multiplication of such useful and necessary works, and not the further extension of railways from the public revenues or under guarantee of profits from such revenues. Two hundred twenty five millions sterling have been spent on railways ; and the Famine Commission of 1898 recorded their opinion that all railways required for protective purposes are done. I deplore therefore the construction of further railways in India out of the public revenues or under guarantee from public revenues. It is a misuse of public money in India under pressure from capitalists and speculators in this country. Only 25 millions sterling have been spent on Irrigation ; if more attention had been paid on irrigations, famines would have been impossible today.

Sir, I have only one word more to say before I conclude. The closing years of the 19th century have revealed to Englishmen, that a greater danger than the Mutiny of 1857 has overtaken India in the impoverishment of the people and the frequency and intensity of famines. There is not an Englishman living, no matter to what political party he may belong, who does not

feel grieved and humiliated at this state of things in India after 150 years of British Rule. To talk to them now of the material progress of India, is an insult to their understanding. To talk to us of the recuperative power of India in the face of these repeated and disastrous famines is a mockery of our misfortunes. No Sir, we must face the broad facts which are apparent to every one, and the facts are simple enough in all conscience when we examine them honestly, for the same economic laws which create wealth or poverty in other parts of the world, create wealth or poverty in India. Prosperous industries, prosperous agriculture, a sound financial administration are the source of wealth of all nations ;—in India you have permitted our indigenous industries to perish, you have overtaxed agriculture, and your financial arrangements are so bad that you annually drain from India a sum equal to one half of her nett revenues. These are broad undeniable facts, and these are the causes of the repeated famines in a country where the land is fertile, the people are frugal and industrious, and peaceful. \

It is necessary, in order to save India, that we should grasp these facts and that the people of England and the people of India should work together to remedy past blunders, and prevent future evils. My countrymen are prepared to do this. I speak without fear of contradiction when I state that there is but one feeling which pervades all ranks of the people of India, and that feeling is to support the British Government, and to help the British Government not only in the field of battle,

but also in the more arduous work of civil administration. It is an unjust and an unwise policy to exclude the people of India,—as you now do,—from all control over the administration. It is unjust because it degrades the people and makes your administration fatally unsuccessful ; and it is unwise because it turns the population of India into hostile critics instead of loyal partakers in the administration of their own concerns. It is only confidence and trust in the people which can maintain your Empire and make it prosperous. Sweep away the present policy of distrust and exclusion, concede to the people of India some control over their own laws and administration, make them co-sharers in the management of their finances,—and they will be jointly responsible with you Englishman, in the eyes of the world, for the prevention of famines, and for the prosperity of the Empire.

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## V. RESTRICTIONS ON LAND ALIENATION.

*Speech made in course of a debate on Mr. Thorburn's paper read before the East India Association at the Westminster Town Hall on June, 24, 1901; the Right Ho'nble Leonard Courtney presiding.*

MR. ROMESH DUTT said : Mr. Thorburn had spoken of the Village-Communities as owning property jointly. That was the practice up to the beginning of the nineteenth century. He looked back with regret to that old institution which was well suited to the genius of the Indian people, and was the earliest form of Self-Government in the world. But he thought Mr. Thorburn had made a mistake in saying that the right of alienation was the gift of the British Government. There never was a time when the Indian peasant had not this old customary right. What the British Government did was to legalize this ancient customary right, as could be gathered from the Blue-books of the eighteenth century and the early part of the nineteenth century. It was plain from those records that 'British administrators in India legalized this customary right, which was as old as the civilization of India itself. The main question raised by Mr. Thorburn had often come before the Government of India.' In Bengal the prohibition of alienation had been discussed at least twice in the last twenty years. In 1883 it was discussed in

connexion with the Bengal Tenancy Bill. Recommendations were then made that in the interests of the cultivators the right of alienation should be taken away from them. But enquiries, in which he himself took a part, showed that transfers were being frequently registered, and yet that the peasants were not being made the slaves of the money lenders. The reports drawn up on the matter were sent to Mr. MacDonnell, now Sir Anthony MacDonnell, who agreed in the view that the cultivator was not to be saved by being made a life-tenant for his holding. A measure of general confiscation was thus avoided at that time. But the proposal came up again from the Punjab. He would say nothing of the needs of the Western Punjab which he knew only as a tourist. But he would say that the cry of alarm rang through India, and in 1896, in Bengal, they were asked again whether it was not necessary to deprive cultivators of the right of alienation in order to save them from their own unwisdom. They were taken aback. They wondered whether they were living in the time of Harqun Al Raschid, and whether the cultivators of the soil must suffer because the Khalif's favourite wife had dreamt a bad dreamt. (Laughter.) The Bengal Government were again advised to drop the proposal. He could speak from personal knowledge of the Orissa division, where, if anywhere, the peasants needed protection against money-lenders. But he was able to show to the Government of Bengal that the peasant there had exercised the right of alienation for sixty or seventy years, and that their land was not pass-

ing to the money-lenders. Once again the proposal was rejected. But only last week he had seen from the Indian newspapers that a Bill was before the Bombay Legislative Council in which it was proposed to create a new class of cultivators who should not have the right of transferring their holdings. He would not judge a Bill which he had not seen. But on broad economic grounds he maintained that failure must attend any effort which sought to save the cultivators by confiscating their rights, and lowering the value of their property. Economic laws which operated elsewhere also operated in India. It was sometimes said that cultivators in India were like children. They might be ignorant and superstitious, but, taken generally, they were conscious of their own interests, and keen in defending them. What they wanted was a moderate assessment and clear rights which they were able to defend. He would say again that he made no remark about the Punjab Act, but the extension of this Act to the rest of India would be a calamity. (Applause.)

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## VI. THE ECONOMIC CAUSES OF INDIAN FAMINES.

*Lecture delivered at a meeting of the Fabian Society  
in London on June, 28, 1901.*

Mr. DUTT said : the occurrence of frequent and wide-spread famines in India in recent years was perhaps the strangest, as it was the saddest, phenomenon in modern times. India was under a civilised administration ; the Indian Civil Service was an able and experienced body of administrators ; the Indian people were frugal and industrious ; the land was rich and fertile ; the country had enjoyed uninterrupted internal peace for nearly half a century. They had all the causes which led to wealth and prosperity in other lands, and yet they were so resourceless and impoverished that every year of drought led to a famine, and deaths from each famine were reckoned not by thousands, but by hundreds of thousands, and sometimes by millions. The economic causes of this strange phenomenon were simple and obvious. The present system of administration, without popular representation, had failed to safeguard the interests of the people. All the sources of national wealth had been narrowed. Agriculture, manufactures, and a sound finance were the sources of wealth in all countries. Let them examine how these sources had been affected by the present system of administration.

## AGRICULTURE AND THE LAND TAX.

He would begin the enquiry with Agriculture and the Land Tax of India. Four-fifths of the population of India depended at the present day on agriculture for subsistence. *Prima facie* if the land was lightly assessed, the people would be prosperous. If the land was over-assessed, the people would be reduced to a chronic state of poverty. The Land Tax therefore was a far more important question in India than in other countries, where the people were less dependent on agriculture. The system of imposing the Land Tax varied in the different provinces of India. He would not trouble them with all those details. He asked them only to remember the broad distinction that, generally speaking, the Land Tax or land revenue was paid to the State by landlords in Northern India, while in Southern India it was paid directly by the cultivators of the soil. There were large exceptions to this general rule, but it would be enough for their purpose that night to remember this general rule. The early British administrators made the fatal mistake in Southern India, as they did in other parts of India, of fixing an impossible land tax, and collecting it with a rigorous severity unknown in India before. In Madras the demand was actually fixed at 45 per cent. of the produce of the soil. In other words if a cultivator produced crops worth £10 a year—and this was a liberal estimate for an Indian cultivator—the Government demanded £4 10s. as its revenue, leaving only £5 10s. to the cultivator to support himself and his family for 12 months, and to

pay for his ploughs and bullocks, his farm labour and seed grain. This naturally caused a great deal of misery and oppression and the accounts to be found in the earlier records were deplorable. [Some extracts from the records of 1818 were read.] This was the state of things in Southern India in the early days of British rule. He need hardly say that much improvement had been effected within the last 80 years. But more improvement was needed. The Land Tax had been reduced from 45 per cent. to a maximum of 33 per cent. but even this was a ruinous rate, for a cultivator could not afford to pay £3 7s. to the State out of £10 of his gross produce. The settlements were made now for long periods, generally once in thirty years, but at each recurring settlement there was a revision of the Land Tax which prevented land improvements and paralysed agriculture. Many English administrators had recommended within the last century that the State demand should be fixed in some way in order to give the people a motive for improvements and a chance of saving. The last of these recommendations was from Lord Ripon, who proposed in 1883 that the State demand should not be increased except when there was a rise in prices of crops. All these recommendations had been disregarded. At each recurring settlement the land revenue was raised; the cultivator of Southern India did not understand on what grounds it was raised; he was not permitted to appeal to courts of justice against such enhancements made by revenue officers; and thus the strongest motive for agricultural improvements and savings was wanting.

Turning now to Northern India, there the land-revenue was generally paid by landlords—not by the actual cultivators. In some parts of India, as in Bengal, the land-revenue had been permanently fixed, once for all, and profits from improvements remained with the people. And it was remarkable that in permanently settled Bengal there had been no famine, involving loss of life, for over a hundred years, showing the beneficial effects of the Permanent Settlement. Other parts of Northern India had not been so fortunate. In the valley of the Jumna and the Ganges Permanent Settlement was promised. The Marquess of Wellesley passed two regulations, in 1803 and in 1805, in which he unreservedly gave a pledge to the people to make a Permanent Settlement. His successor, Lord Minto, pressed the Directors of the East India Company to redeem this pledge. Nevertheless, the directors of the East India Company violated the pledge, and a Permanent Settlement of the land revenue was not concluded in Northern India. The company was abolished in 1858. Three years after, Lord Canning, the first Viceroy of India under the Crown, again pressed for permanently settling the land revenues of India. Lord Lawrence, another distinguished Viceroy and able statesman, supported this proposal. Two Secretaries of State, Sir Charles Wood, a Liberal, and Sir Stafford Northcote, a Conservative, recommended this measure. Nevertheless the proposal was finally rejected in England in 1883. In the absence of a Permanent Settlement of the land revenue, the State demand

had varied from time to time in most parts of Northern India. The early British administrators fixed it as high as they could—they demanded from landlords eighty percent of their rental as the Government revenue. If a landlord's rental was £1,200, the East India Company demand £1000 out of it as the Land Tax. This was found an oppressive and impossible rate. In 1833 the Land Tax was reduced to two-thirds; and in 1855 to one-half of the rental. In other words the landlord with a rental of £1,200 now paid to the Government £600 as the Land Tax. But this was not all. A new settlement was made every twenty or thirty years. In these recurring settlements the landlord's rental was ascertained after fresh enquiries. The land revenue demanded was not half the actual rental, but half the prospective rental. And to this a great many local taxes were added for local purposes.

Such was the state of things now in India. It was clear that agriculture could not flourish under such a system. There was no adequate motive for land improvements or for savings, unless there was some fixity in the Government demand. What was wanted was, (1) some clear fixed rules limiting within moderate limits the liabilities of the cultivator in Southern India, and of the landlord in Northern India; and (2) some independent Courts of Justice to which the taxpayer could appeal if these rules were violated or misinterpreted by the revenue officers. The agricultural population of India demanded such security and justice under the British rule.

## INDIAN MANUFACTURES.

The question of agriculture was the most important question in India. The history of Indian manufactures was equally sad. The policy of the East India Company, from the commencement of their rule, was to discourage Indian manufactures for the benefit of British manufacturers. The Company became the administrators of Bengal in 1765. Four years later they issued an order that the manufacture of silk fabrics should be discouraged in Bengal, that the people should produce raw silk in India to be woven in England, that Indian silk-winders should be made to work in the company's factories and prohibited from working outside, "under severe penalties, by the authority of the Government." The effect of this mandate, according to the Select Committee of the House of Commons was "to change the whole face of that industrious country, in order to render it a field for the produce of crude materials subservient to the manufacturers of Great Britain." This Report of the Select Committee was submitted in 1783. Let them pass over a period of thirty years to 1813, when the East India Company's charter was renewed. An enquiry was made, as usual, before the renewal of the Charter. Eminent witnesses like Warren Hastings of Bengal, Thomas Munro of Madras, and Sir John Malcolm of Bombay, were examined. They were asked by the House of Commons, not how Indian manufactures could be encouraged, but how they could be discouraged to make room for British manufactures. For it was found that even up to that date Indian silk

and cotton goods could be sold in England at a price from 50 to 60 per cent. lower than those produced in England. What was the policy which England pursued? She imposed a prohibitive duty which killed the Indian manufactures. The following statement was made by Joseph Ranking before the House of Commons during their enquiry of 1813:

"Can you state what is the 'ad valorem' duty on piece goods sold at the East India House?

"The duty on the class called Calicoes is £3. 6s. 8d. per cent. upon importation; and if they are used for home consumption, there is a further duty of £68. 6s. 8d. per cent."

"There is another class called Muslins, on which the duty on importation is 10 per cent.; and if they are used for home consumption, of £27. 6s. 8d. per cent.

"There is a third class, coloured goods, which are prohibited from being used in this country, upon which there is a duty upon importation of £3. 6s. 8d. per cent; they are only for exportation."

"This Session of Parliament there has been a new duty of 20 per cent. on the consolidated duties, which will make the duties of Calicoes . . . for home consumption £78. 6s. 8d. per cent.; upon Muslins for home consumption £31. 6s. 8d."

This finally killed the Indian weaving manufacture. Henry St. George Tucker, himself a Director of the East India Company, wrote in 1823:—"India is thus reduced from the state of a manufacturing to that of an agricultural country."

[Extracts from Tucker's memorandum dated 1823 were here read.]

#### RAILWAYS AND IRRIGATION.

The prohibitive duties had now been abolished after they had done their fatal work. Other changes had also taken place in India. About the middle of the 19th century railways were introduced in India. Railways were beneficial everywhere in the world by shortening distances, and making journeys cheaper, quicker, and easier. But in India, unfortunately, railways had been constructed by the Government out of the public revenues, or by private companies under guarantee of profit out of the public revenues, and the economic effect of this had not been beneficial. It had been a financial loss to Indians. After deducting all earnings they had paid forty millions sterling out of the revenues of India to cover the loss ; and the annual loss still continued. Capitalists and speculators and manufacturers in this country, who had votes, were putting continual pressure on the Government of India for the construction of more lines with guarantee of profits from the Indian revenues. Indians, who had no votes, were unable to resist this pressure, and railways had been overdone. The Famine Commission of 1898 reported that all lines required for famine protective purposes had been done, but still more lines were being constructed which the people did not want, and which the people were made to pay for. On the other hand, irrigation works which were needed by the people for the protection of their

crops, were neglected. 250 millions sterling had been spent on railways, and only 25 millions on irrigation up to date. Yet out of 220 million acres of cultivated land in India, only 20 millions or less than one-tenth the area, were protected by irrigation works.

The people of India had struggled against every adverse circumstance, and within the last half century had endeavoured to revive their manufactures by adopting European methods, and by the help of steam and machinery. Cotton mills had been started in Bombay and in Bengal, and the products of these mills had some sale in India and out of India. No Royal Commission or Committee of the House of Commons sat to help and promote this infant enterprise ; if any Government had instituted an enquiry with this avowed purpose, it was likely that British voters would have turned it out of office within a twelve-month. As it was, Lancashire voters forced the Indian Government to pass tariff rules which no national Government, responsible for the good of the people under its administration, would have passed. A small import duty used to be imposed in India on piece goods and other articles, not for the purposes of protection, but merely as a source of revenue much needed. To this the Lancashire manufacturers objected, and the Indian Government was compelled to surrender this source of revenue in 1882. But the revenue so surrendered could not be replaced ; the Indian Government was in a bad way, and wished to re-impose it. A sort of compromise was then effected which was a striking illustration of how India was ruled

under the dictation of British manufacturers. An import duty was re-imposed on British piece goods, and this was accompanied by a similar duty imposed on goods manufactured in India to satisfy the British manufacturers. Under the imposition of this strange duty—without parallel in any other country in the civilised world—the Indian mills which were struggling for existence had greatly declined within the last decade, especially in competition, with Japan which imposed no such duty on its own products.

#### FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION.

He now turned to the financial administration of India. The entire financial policy of England in respect of India from the 18th century to the present day was to charge to India everything which could rightly, or even wrongly, be charged to that unrepresented country. England had spent hundreds of millions in acquiring and defending her colonies all over the earth. For acquiring and defending the Empire of India, she had not paid a shilling. On the contrary, during the rule of the East India Company, India paid an annual tribute to England reckoned in millions. When the company was abolished, the cost of the transfer of the Indian Empire to the Crown was charged to India. Since then they had made India pay for wars in China, Afghanistan, Persia, and the Soudan. They maintained a vast army in India, mainly for imperial purposes, at the cost of the people of India. They had virtually excluded the people of India from nearly all high offices in their own country

in order to find a career for English boys in India. A Parliamentary Return was submitted nine years ago, showing all salaries and pensions of a thousand rupees and upwards paid by India. Taking Rs. 10 for a pound sterling, the total came to fourteen millions sterling to Englishmen annually; and only  $3\frac{1}{4}$  millions to the Natives of India. Such had been the financial policy of England towards an unrepresented country. The result was that public debt had increased by leaps and bounds in India in a time of profound peace. The public debt, taking ten rupees for a pound, was 118 millions sterling in 1875; in 1895 it was 220 millions. In other words while the public debt was steadily decreased in England, mainly under Mr. Gladstone's influence, it nearly doubled in India within 20 years of profound peace. England paid for the Colonial Office, located in Whitehall. India paid for the India Office located in a part of the same building. In payment of the expenses of that office, and of various other liabilities, India had to make a constantly increasing annual remittance to England. As India had little manufacture and little trade, virtually the whole pressure fell on the produce of the soil—on the food of the people. Thus India was forced to export far more than she imported, and this excess was increasing at a startling rate. He compiled the following figures from a paper which an official of the India Office read before the Society of Arts in March last :—

## ANNUAL EXCESS OF EXPORTS OVER IMPORTS.

| FROM               | Tens of Rupees. |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1859 to 1863 . . . | 2 millions      |
| 1864 to 1868 . . . | 8 „             |
| 1869 to 1873 . . . | 16 „            |
| 1874 to 1878 . . . | 15 „            |
| 1879 to 1883 . . . | 19 „            |
| 1884 to 1888 . . . | 15 „            |
| 1889 to 1893 . . . | 20 „            |
| 1894 to 1898 . . . | 25 „            |

The significance of the above figures would be better understood by comparing them with the total revenues of India. The Royal Commission on Indian expenditure in their recently published Report found the net revenues of India to be 57 million tens of rupees. A sum, therefore, nearly equal to one half of the public revenues of India was annually remitted out of India without a direct equivalent. A sum representing the food of twenty-five millions of the people of India was annually remitted to England without a direct return. Was it possible that under this financial arrangement India could be other than impoverished and famine-stricken? If any of the prosperous countries of the world—America or England, France or Germany—had been subjected to such conditions, would not that country have been reduced to poverty, and visited by famines, within a few decades?

## CONCLUSION.

He must now conclude. It was necessary to remember that there was no great economic effect without an economic cause. The famines in India were directly

caused by the failure of rains in particular tracts, but the rains never failed over the whole of India, and there had never been a year when the total food supply of India was insufficient for the total population of India. What caused distress and deaths was that the people had been so hopelessly impoverished that they could not buy when the crops failed in any particular locality. Let them remove the economic causes of the nation's poverty and they would remove the causes of famines. In the first place they should moderate the land tax and give it some equitable limits which would be understood by the people. In the second place they should discontinue the construction of railways out of public revenues, or under guarantee of profits from public revenues, and extend irrigation works. In the third place they should encourage the industries of India, as the Government of a country ought to do, and thus multiply and add to the resources of the people. In the fourth place they should follow a just and equitable financial policy towards India, as in the case of British Colonies, relieve India from unfair charges, reduce her public debt, and reduce that annual drain which was impoverishing the nation. Lastly they should have some trust and confidence in the people, and admit them to some share in the control of the administration, for it was not in human nature that they should be able to safe-guard the interests of another people without allowing them some voice in their own concerns.

In the words of one of England's greatest philosophers and economists, John Stuart Mill, "The government

of a people by itself has a meaning and a reality ; but such a thing as government of one people by another does not and cannot exist. One people may keep another for its own use, a place to make money in, a human cattle farm to be worked for the profit of its own inhabitants." England did not wish to maintain India as a "human cattle farm," and the only way in which England could improve the condition and promote the prosperity of India was the method she had so successfully followed in all her Colonies—namely, giving the people themselves some real share in the administration of their own concerns. (Applause.)

The address, which took an hour to deliver, was listened to with the greatest interest, and frequently interrupted by cheers.

At its conclusion, numerous questions were asked, which afforded Mr. Dutt an opportunity to repeat, illustrate, and amplify his remarks. Several speakers, including Mr Pearsall, Mr. Bland, Captain St. John, and Captain Rolleston then spoke, and were followed by the Chairman, Mr. Macrosty. Mr. Romesh Dutt replied to their observations, and the meeting, which began at 8 p.m., concluded after 10 p.m., with the usual vote of thanks to the lecturer.

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## VII. FAMINES AND THE FAMINE

### COMMISSION OF 1900.

[*Speech delivered at Liverpool on October, 18, 1901.*]

ON Friday afternoon, in the Common Hall, Hackins-  
Hey, a public meeting was held for the purpose of hear-  
ing an address by Mr. R. C. Dutt, Lecturer in Indian  
History, University College, London. Sir Edward Russell  
presided, and among an attentive and appreciative  
assemblage and pretty numerous attendance were Arch-  
deacon Madden, the Rev. E. N. Hoare, Dr. Permewan,  
Mr. J. Hope Simpson, Mr. J. Samuelson, Mr. W. H.  
Russell, Mr. E. W. Cropper, Mr. Allan Bright, Mr. F.  
Salisbury, Mrs. Stewart-Brown, Mrs. W. H. Russel, Mr.  
J. W. S. Callie, Mr. Sam Reeves, Mr. and Mrs. W. C.  
Bonnerjee, and their daughter Mrs. Blair. As the  
Chairman remarked at the close of the proceedings, the  
demonstration and its signal success were owing to the  
patriotic efforts of Mrs. Blair, assisted by some English  
ladies. The following report appeared in *India*.

The Chairman, in his introductory remarks, said they  
were assembled to be instructed in a subject which  
deeply concerned humanity, and which as deeply con-  
cerned the interests, the reputation, and the honour of  
the British Empire. (Hear, hear.) He need scarcely  
say, both on his own account and on behalf of many  
in that room, that they were not there to dogmatise—  
in fact, that they were incapable of dogmatising on the

subject upon which they were to be addressed. But they hoped instructed by a man whom they knew to be thoroughly possessed of the facts of the case, to have formed strong opinions upon it, and to have great hopes of a reform in the management of such affairs as tended to the supply of food in India and the avoidance of the catastrophes which they had so deeply to regret. The real thing they started with that afternoon, he hoped, was a disposition to increase and to cultivate in themselves the feeling of responsibility which should come to them as members of the great Empire which had India under its control. (Applause.) There was a great deal indeed to lament in the past in the apathy with which such occurrences as they had had to deplore had been regarded. It was almost a proverb in this country that Indian affairs had not received the attention to which their magnitude and the extent to which India was bound up with our honour and credit entitled them. Let them make at the very outset the resolution that that meeting should be the beginning of a different state of things, at all events, as regarded themselves. It was impossible to listen to, or to read of, the terrible famines that had occurred in India, the loss of life, and the lives of abject misery that were led, without feeling that it was a state of things for which, if they were in any degree responsible, they should at once, as far as they could, try and devise some remedy. There were various ways of looking at the matter. They might regard famines as things to be prevented, or they might regard the occurrences during famine as evils to be mitigated

and sufferings to be lessened as far as they could. But the whole matter had been plunged into the mystery in which such great catastrophes of Nature were involved. All they could hope for was that they might be enabled, by the information they might derive, and by the impulses given to them in the direction of responsibility and in the direction of improvement, to create a real interest in the subject, which should make it a constant effort on their part, in reference to Parliament and in reference to public opinion, to produce such a change as they must all desire. (Applause). They were about to hear a lecture by a gentleman who was a master of the subject. He was not only acquainted with the subject and had studied it, but he was known to and knew all those best entitled to speak upon it. He (Sir Edward Russell) was sure they would listen with deep interest, great anxiety, and profit to all Mr. Dutt had to say on the matter. (Applause.)

Mr. Romesh Dutt said : When he was asked a few weeks ago to speak on the subject of famines in India in that great city of Liverpool, he felt some natural hesitation in undertaking the task. The subject had been so constantly before them during the last three or four years, and had been so frequently dealt with in the Press and on the Platform, that he felt some misgivings in bringing the matter before them once more. Nevertheless there were grave reasons which induced him to accept the kind offer. Indian famine was an Imperial question, and the gravest of all Imperial questions. (Applause). Indian famine was a serious problem which

Englishmen would have to face again and again till it had been satisfactorily solved. There was no man or woman in that hall, or in the United Kingdom, who had not felt humiliated by the recurrence of these distressing famines under British rule in India, and who did not desire to do all that was humanly possible to avert these great and terrible catastrophes in the future.

#### INDIAN FAMINES DURING FORTY YEARS.

Famines were a thing of the past in all well-administered Western countries in the world. They read of famines in past centuries in France, Germany, Ireland, and other countries, when hundreds of thousands of people perished for want of food. Those days were gone, he hoped for ever, and the introduction of better government and a sounder system of finance had made famines on a large scale impossible in these countries. In India, unfortunately, the reverse was the case. Not only had famines continued after a hundred and forty years of British rule, but they had become more frequent, more widespread, and more fatal. He would not trouble them with the history of these hundred and forty years that afternoon, but he would mention that within the period which he could well remember—within the last forty years—there had been in India ten or twelve desolating and wide-spread famines, and nearly 20 millions of people had perished of starvation. He remembered the great famine of 1860, when they, as schoolboys, were asked to contribute their humble mite

to save the lives of hundreds of thousands of people who were then perishing in Northern India. He remembered the famine of 1866 when the Province of Orissa lost one-third of its population, and the city of Calcutta was filled with starving emigrants from that Province, men and women with children in their arms dying in the streets, in spite of every possible endeavour to relieve them. He remembered the famine of 1874, when he had the honour of being employed as a Relief Officer, and when through the noble exertions, of Lord Northbrook, then Viceroy of India, loss of life was prevented in the stricken province of Behar. (Cheers.) Then came the more dreadful Madras famine of 1877, which in a single year carried off more than five millions of people—a population equal to that of Scotland or of Ireland perished in one Indian province in one year. Then followed the famines of 1878, 1889, and 1892; and lastly came the disastrous famine of 1897, which they all remembered, and which was more widespread than any previous famine had ever been in India. They then thought that it was the worst calamity which could happen to any country in any single year. But they were mistaken. In 1899 followed a still more widespread—and what was worse, a more continuous—famine, for it had lasted these three years, and was not quite over yet. Nothing in the history of India, or of the world, was more appalling than the recurrence of these famines claiming their victims by the hundred thousand or the million, every third or fourth year. No story of wars and invasions in modern or ancient times was more tragic than the

story of deaths of twenty millions of silent uncomplaining sufferers in India, within the last forty years of British rule.

#### PREVENTION OF FUTURE FAMINES.

These were facts which all Englishmen would have to face. All Englishmen of all classes and all political persuasions were determined that if famines could be stopped by human wisdom and endeavour, they should be stopped in India. There was a school of writers and speakers, some of whom existed to this day, who represented that India was the natural home of famines, that famines were the work of God, and that human endeavours to prevent them were unavailing. To him such a creed appeared to be not only untrue and unmanly, but even blasphemous. (Loud applause.) There was a manlier and honester school of writers who had candidly held that these famines were mainly due to human blunders, and that they could be, and should be, prevented by human wisdom and endeavour. They pointed out that there never had been in any year a deficiency of food supply in all India ; that it was the poverty of the people which had prevented them from buying food from neighbouring districts and provinces when the crops failed in any one province, and that famines could be prevented by removing this poverty and enabling the people to buy food from their neighbours in bad years as they in England did in all years. 'The obvious and radical remedy for famines was to improve the material condition of the people—(1) to lighten the burdens on the land, (2) to save crops by irrigation, (3) to revive

the industries of the people, and (4) to reform the financial arrangements of the country. »

### THE LAND TAX.

Let them take the Indian Land Tax first. 'India to-day was not a great manufacturing country or a great commercial country, but a great agricultural country ; and four-fifths of the population depended directly or indirectly on the produce of the soil. It followed that that if the soil were lightly taxed, the people might be prosperous ; but if the soil was heavily assessed the people must be impoverished. In Northern India the cultivators generally paid their rents to landlords, and the landlords paid the Land Tax to the Government ; while in Southern India—in Bombay and Madras—the cultivators paid the Land Tax direct to the State, there being generally speaking, no intervening landlords. They had urged again and again that in Southern India—in Madras and Bombay—where the State levied the tax direct from the peasant proprietors, the assessment was too heavy ; that in many cases it swept away the whole economic rent of the land ; that it made the cultivator unable to save anything even in good years against years of bad harvest ; that it left him resourceless and indebted and an easy prey to famines. On the other hand the apologists of the Indian Government had denied this charge ; they denied any connexion between land assessments and famines ; they had denounced criticism as uninformed and foolish. Well the critics demanded a public enquiry ; they asked for a Commission to enquire

into the incidence of the Land Tax in India, but no such public enquiry had yet been made. However, something was conceded, a Famine Commission was appointed in December last to enquire into the methods of relief operations in India, and this Commission was permitted incidentally to enquire into the subject of land assessments. The Famine Commission, headed by Sir Antony MacDonnell, the ablest administrator now in India, submitted their report on May 8 last, and though five months had elapsed since, that report had not yet been published in England. All that they had been permitted to see yet was a summary of that report which had appeared in Indian and English newspapers; and this summary proved that their criticisms were neither uninformed nor foolish; that heavy land assessment in Bombay together with its rigorous collection was one of the main causes of the poverty and indebtedness of the cultivators of Bombay. The Famine Commissioners said that in Bombay the land tax, such as it was, could not be collected in short years without forcing the Ryots into debt. They said that the land tax was "full" in Gujrat, and that its rigidity in hard times forced the cultivators into debt. They said that "unless provision for suspension and remission of revenue and rent . . . be an integral part of the revenue system in any province, the cultivator will be forced to borrow on conditions incompatible with his solvency and independence." And they added that "nothing can be more useful in anticipation of famine than improvements in the material condition of the cultivators whereby they may be enabled

to withstand the pressure of hard times" These were admissions, made now for the first time in an official document, clearly establishing that connexion between famines in India and its Land Tax which they had urged again and again within the last few years, and which the apologists of Indian administration had hitherto ignored. He did not say that the Commission had yet arrived at the whole truth. The Commission's figures representing the produce of the soil in the different Provinces of India were admittedly guess work, and obviously incorrect ; and they could prove the produce to be vastly over-estimated if the cultivator was allowed to adduce evidence as to the average produce of his field before any Court of Enquiry, or any Commission appointed for the purpose. But nevertheless, what the Commission had stated in its report showed that public criticism was helpful to the cause of truth and of good administration in India, as it was in every other part of the world. Those who denounced all criticism on Indian administration forgot that every Government in the world needed the aid of criticism, and that the best Government on earth would degenerate into blind and blundering despotism if there was no public opinion and no public criticism. Now that the connexion between the Land Tax and famines had been acknowledged, the public would demand, not only remissions and suspensions of the tax as the Famine Commission had recommended, but also the moderating of that tax in places where it was excessive. He understood that such a revision of the land tax had already begun in the Central Provinces of India. •

## IRRIGATION.

Next he came to the subject of Irrigation ; and here also they would find that well-informed criticism was absolutely in the right. India would have been safer from famines by this time if that criticism had more influence with the Indian Government. The old Hindu Rajas and Mahomedan Governors had left them magnificent irrigation works in all parts of India ; and they had urged again and again that while railways had been overdone in India under British rule, irrigation had been neglected.\* Two hundred and twenty-five millions sterling had been spent on railways, while only 25 millions had been spent on irrigation ; and out of over 200 million acres of cultivated land in India only about 20 millions were protected by irrigation works. Their cry had been a cry in the wilderness. Capitalists and speculators had always brought pressure on the Indian Government for more railways out of the public revenues or under guarantee of profits from the public revenues ; and down to the present year the Government of India was spending more on railways than on irrigation. Let them mark what the Famine Commissioners said. Railway construction, they said, had played its part in the policy of famine insurance. On the other hand, there was a wide field for the construction of irrigation works. And, confirming the opinion of the previous Famine Commission, this Commission gave its "cordial approval to a departure in famine policy which would place irrigation works in the place

that protective railways have hitherto occupied in the famine insurance programme." This was clear and emphatic. If this departure had taken place twenty years ago, when the Famine Commission of 1880 recommended it, India to-day would have been less subject to famines and deaths from starvation.<sup>7</sup>

#### DECLINING INDUSTRIES AND THE ECONOMIC DRAIN.

There were one or two other matters on which he would have liked to dwell at some length if time permitted, but he could only make a bare mention of them. One of the great sources of a nation's income was its industries and manufactures. For centuries before the British occupation of India, that country was renowned for its excellent manufactures which found their way to all the great markets of Asia and Europe. It was unfortunately true that under British rule Indian manufactures had declined, and the people of India had been forced to agriculture as the one remaining source of their national existence.<sup>8</sup> This was a state of things which could not be good for the people of India, or of any other people, and one of the most serious problems was to find means to promote the indigenous manufactures of India, to diversify the industries of the people, and to add to their resources. Another great evil from which India suffered at present was the financial arrangement under which a large portion of the revenues of India was drained away from that country year after year.<sup>9</sup> They in England were a rich and a prosperous people, and raised an immense revenue from

taxation for public expenditure ; but the whole of this revenue was spent in the country, flowed back to the people in one shape or another, and fructified the trades and industries of the people. But if one-half of their public revenue was annually drained out of England, and spent in Germany or France or America, England, rich as she was, would soon be a land of famines. Yet this was precisely what was happening in India ; on the one hand her industries had declined and her agriculture was over taxed ; and on the other hand a large proportion of the taxation so raised was not spent in India, but was drained out of that country, leaving her poorer every year.<sup>6</sup> This, in the words of Lord Salisbury, who was Secretary of State 25 years ago, was the "bleeding" of India ; and it was necessary to stop this process if they desired to restore to that country life and prosperity. It was an act which was enjoined by their highest ethics, to do unto others as they would others should do to them ; and it was an act which was enjoined by their own interest. Their trade with India could not prosper so long as India continued in her present impoverished state. Within the last ten years the average annual import of merchandise into India had been between 47 millions and 49 millions sterling, and it was possible that about 30 millions of this was British goods. Thirty millions among a population of three hundred millions gave an average of two shillings per head of the population ; and he said without hesitation that they could double this rate if India were prosperous. In this way they could easily

double their exports, add a new India to their possessions, and extend their empire and trade without firing a cartridge. Their duty was the same as their interest ; and as history had shown time after time the honestest policy was also the best policy, for nations as for individuals, (Applause)

#### THE INDIAN FAMINE UNION.

He would not detain them longer. He thanked them sincerely for the attention with which they had listened to him, and he had no doubt the subject was one which would receive their continuous and urgent attention. They would reflect with pain that the calamities which had visited their fellow subjects in India within this generation were unsurpassed, and perhaps unprecedented in the history of any period or of any country in the world. They would reflect with concern that these fatal and disastrous famines were not the work of God, but were the results of human blunders which could be rectified.\* There was a right way of profiting by an empire, and there was a wrong way. Honest equitable trade was the right way ; to drain a subject country by annual contribution without a direct return was the wrong way. Rome pursued this wrong way ; she impoverished Egypt and Sicily and other Provinces, and Rome fell at last, a victim to wealth and luxury. Spain too pursued the wrong way ; she impoverished South America ; and the Duke of Alva boasted that he sent a stream of gold, a yard wide, flowing from the Netherlands to Spain ; the result was that, Spain fell, a victim to wealth and moral

turpitude. England might yet pursue the right path ; she might reduce the Home Charges and the Economic Drain from India ; she might establish an equation between the exports and imports of India ; she might thus relieve India while doubling her own commerce. These were the salutary remedies which they recommended, the needed reforms they looked forward to. The same economic laws led to wealth or to poverty in all parts of the world, and the measures which had prevented famines in other parts of the civilised world would have the same beneficial results in India, if they had the wisdom and determination to adopt and pursue them in that country. \* A Union had been formed in London called the Indian Famine Union, with the object of enquiring into the causes of Indian famines and adopting measures for their prevention. A Memorial addressed to the Secretary of State for India to institute such enquiries had been signed by some of the foremost men in this country. He rejoiced to find the names of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Liverpool, and the Dean of Manchester among the signatories. Further action would be taken by the Famine Union, in due time. ° The people of Lancashire were as deeply interested in the welfare of India as the people of any other part of the United Kingdom, and it was not unlikely they might wish to form a Union among themselves. He had not the least doubt that the opinions and the influence of Lancashire would effectually promote the object they all had in view—to take measures to prevent the recurrence of famines in India, and to

promote the prosperity and happiness of the three hundred millions of their Indian fellow subjects. (Prolonged cheers).

The CHAIRMAN, in proposing a vote of thanks to Mr. Dutt for his lecture, said he trusted they would all feel the sympathy which the lecturer had expressed for the exertions being made in London for due enquiry into this great subject. They had felt how very broad and statesmanlike must be the policy that had to deal with the great evil they had to contend with. They had also felt that there were many aspects, even beyond that of famine, in which the statesmanship which dealt with Indian affairs needed great reformation. (Hear, hear) It was a point for them all to keep in their minds, whether the financial arrangements with India were equitable, whether they were worthy of the boasts which we made about our Indian Empire, and whether it might not be an object for our statesmen to place the relations of India, both economically and constitutionally, on a basis more consistent with the reputation of our Empire. (Applause.) He was afraid it was a fact, as was hinted to them in the lecture, that our consciences in this country were much more active when there was anything to be got, than when there was anything to give. (Laughter, and hear, hear, and a Voice : "South Africa.") Let them hope, however, that one of the consequences of the great change which had lately taken place in a sort of acceleration and intensification of the Imperial feeling would be that the conscience as well as the ambition of the country would develop—that they would

not only develop the ambition which tended to increase the greatness of the country, but that with that would come a conscience for the duty which that Empire involved. (Applause.)

The Ven. Archdeacon MADDEN, in seconding the vote of thanks, said he did not think that mere charity from England was what was wanted in India. In his opinion, the remedy for these famines seemed to be in assisting to make the people of India self-supporting and self-reliant. (Applause.)

Mr. SAM REEVES expressed the belief that the government of India by English officials, whom he described as "carpet-baggers," was prejudicial to the prosperity of the country. His view was that it would be better if Native Indians were allowed to take a more responsible official part in the government of their own country. He urged that before the condition of India could be improved the people of that country would have to "kick," as the people of other countries had had to do in times gone by, before they obtained the reforms they needed.

Sir EDWARD RUSSELL here mentioned that the originators of the meeting were most anxious to hear from any one willing to assist in the formation of a branch to gain information and to stimulate public opinion. He added that that demonstration was entirely the result of the efforts of a lady—Mrs. Blain—assisted by some other ladies.

The proposition was then carried with enthusiasm.

Dr. PERMEWAN wanted to know from the lecturer whether private capitalists might not provide the desired irrigation works, considering the 5 or 6 per cent. profit spoken of.

• Mr. DUTT replied that the Government would not permit of the intervention of private capitalists in irrigation works, expenditure in which received its return from an irrigation rate. Of course, this did not apply to landlords dealing with their own estates. Answering a question from another gentleman, as to more direct Parliamentary representation for the people of India, Mr. Dutt said it would be impossible for a British Parliament, even if it had more time to give, to understand Indian questions from the bottom, and to discuss with the local knowledge they ought to have. What was looked forward to was that there should be an executive council in every province, and that some representative Indian or Indians should find place in each of these, and that the legislative councils of India should be expanded. The Indian Civil Service were an able body of administrators; the official members of the present councils were able and experienced men; but good government was impossible in India until and unless popular opinion was fairly represented in those councils. Mr. Dutt said he had urged this to the Viceroy himself two years ago. •

Mr. JAMES SAMUELSON, in proposing a concluding vote of thanks to the chairman, which was duly honoured, accentuated a remark of the lecturer as to the effi-

ency of the Indian Civil Service by asserting, on the authority of a personal visit to India, that the higher one got in that service the more intense became the sympathetic interest in the Native populations.

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## VIII. THE ECONOMIC CONDITION OF INDIA.

*[Speech delivered at the Philosophical Institution, Glasgow,  
on September 4, 1901.]*

MR. ROMESH DUTT said : Last Monday, my esteemed and distinguished friend, Sir John Jardine, gave you a general account of that great country which now forms an important portion of the British Empire. He gave you an account of India and its people, told you of the different Provinces into which British India is divided, and also of those States which are ruled by their own Native Princes. To-night, we shall look into the state of things in India from a different standpoint. We shall enquire into the economic condition of the people—their industries, their trades, their agriculture. We shall try to ascertain how far the sources of national wealth in India have been developed by railways, and how far the annual harvests of the people have made safe by irrigation works. We shall examine the incidence of the Land Tax on the agricultural population of India, and the present state of the finances of that country. In a word the material condition of the vast population of India, forming a sixth of the human race, will form the subject of our enquiry this evening.

This is a subject which must always receive the attention of all thoughtful men and women in this country, but recent events in India have invested this subject with

a special importance. There is not a man or woman in Great Britain who has not felt grieved by the accounts of recent famines in India. Within the memory of men who are still in their middle age, within the last 30 years, there have been no less than ten desolating famines, causing the deaths of fifteen millions of people in India. And to-night, when we are assembled in this hall, half a million of people are assembled in the different famine camps in Western India, and that country is passing through its third year of a continuous famine. It is necessary, therefore, that we should enquire somewhat minutely into the material condition of the people of India, and find out how far it is possible to prevent or minimise the effects of famines in India in the future, as they have been prevented in other parts of the British Empire.

#### I. AGRICULTURE AND THE LAND TAX.

The material well-being of the people of India, as in every other part of the world, depends on successful agriculture, on flourishing industries, and on sound system of finance. I take agriculture first, because four-fifths of the population of India depend directly or indirectly on agriculture. It is the main industry of India, the main source of subsistence for the people. This is an important fact which we should always bear in mind in speaking about India. India, today, is essentially an agricultural country. If agriculture flourishes, if the crops are safe-guarded, if the land is moderately taxed, the people are prosperous. If any of these conditions

is wanting, the people must necessarily be on the verge of starvation, and must perish in years of bad harvest.

The land system of India is different from the land system of this country. Here you are familiar with the landlord who owns land, the farmer who holds farms, and the agricultural labourer who is paid by wages and has no permanent rights in the land he cultivates. In India, on the contrary, the actual cultivator, by immemorial custom, had some proprietary and heritable rights in the field which he cultivated. Sometimes, as in Bengal, he lived under his landlord, paying rent to the landlord, but owning his hereditary field from which he could not be evicted so long as he paid the customary rent. In other instances, as in Northern India and in Madras and Bombay, he lived in his village community, that ancient system of village self-government which prevailed in India for thousands of years. The landlord or the village community paid the Land Tax to the State ; the individual cultivator paid his rent to the landlord or his share of produce to the community, and held his ancestral field from generation to generation, without let or hinderance. Such was the ancient land system of India—the land belonged to the nation, not to any privileged class.

How has this system been affected by British rule ? In Bengal and some other places, the ancient system has been preserved and strengthened. The British Government levies the Land Tax from the landlords, and the amount of this Tax was permanently settled a hundred years ago—between 1793 and 1805. But in Northern

India, as well as in Madras and Bombay, where the village community system flourished down to the early years of the nineteenth century, that old institution exists no longer. That ancient form of village self-government has unfortunately perished under the too centralised system of British administration. In Northern India, landlords have taken the place of these communities; in Madras and Bombay, generally, the cultivators are directly under the State. Therefore, if you ask me what is the actual position and status of the Indian cultivator at the present day, I can roughly describe it in one sentence. In Northern India the cultivator lives under landlords, and the landlords pay the Land Tax to the State; in Southern India the cultivator lives directly under the State, and pays the Land Tax to the State. There are exceptions to this general rule, but it will be enough for our purpose this evening to remember this broad distinction. In Northern India it is the landlord who pays the Land Tax to the State; in Southern India it is the cultivator who pays the Land Tax to the State.

Now what is this Indian Land Tax? You are aware that in England a Land Tax was raised during the wars of the Spanish Succession at the rate of 4s. in the £ of annual value, i. e., 20 per cent. on the rental; and that it was reduced after the Peace of Utrecht to 2s. in the £ and then 1s. in the £, or 5 per cent. on the rental.

The Land Tax in England varied between these limits, until it was made perpetual and redeemable by Pitt's Government in 1798. For a hundred years, therefore, before it was made perpetual, the Land Tax

averaged between 5 and 20 per cent. on the rental in England. In India the Land Tax ranges between 35 per cent. and 100 per cent. of the rental! Let me explain this to you in a few words.

In Bengal, where the Land Tax was permanently fixed over a hundred years ago, it now bears a proportion of 28 per cent. on the rental of estates. To this should be added a newer tax of  $6\frac{1}{4}$  per cent., also assessed on the rent, so that the total tax on land in this Province comes to about 35 per cent.

In Northern India, the Government of Lord Dalhousie declared as far back as 1855 its intention to limit the Land Tax to 50 per cent. of the rental. In his own words, the Government was determined "to limit the demand of the State to 50 per cent. or one-half of the average net assets." This was a heavy tax, but it was a clear and definite limit. I regret to state that even this high limit has now been exceeded. A number of new taxes are now surcharged on the Land Tax, and the Land Tax itself came to be assessed at 50 per cent., not on the actual rental, but on the prospective rental of estates. In other words, if a landlord's rental is £1,200, the Government demanded a Tax, not of £600, but may be of £700, on the ground that the rental may rise hereafter. Is this not paltering with the people of India in a double sense, keeping the word of Dalhousie's promise to the ear and breaking it to the hope?

In the Central Provinces of India, Lord Dalhousie's rule of limiting the Land Tax to half the rental was accepted in 1855, but was evaded in 1863. And then

the rule was openly abandoned in 1888, and the Government demanded a Land Tax up to 60 per cent of the rental, in addition to other taxes also assessed on the rent.

Lastly in Madras and Bombay, the rule of limiting the Land Tax to half the rent was also declared in 1856 and 1864, but has been evaded in practice. The Directors of the East India Company wrote in their despatch of 1856 that the "rights of the Government is not a rent, which consists of all the surplus produce after paying the cost of cultivation and the profits of agricultural stocks, but a land revenue only." And after the Company was abolished, Sir Charles Wood, the first Secretary of State for India, wrote in his despatch of 1864 that he desired to take only a share, and generally a half share, of the rent as Land Tax. This is the rule; but in practice the Government often takes one-third of the field produce as Land Tax, and this is not 50 per cent., but approximates to 100 per cent. of the economic rent of the field. For in a small farm yielding £12 a year, the cost of cultivation and the profits of the agricultural stock generally exceed £6 or even £7 in the year; and the Government by demanding £4 as Land Tax sweeps away nearly the whole of the economic rent. How is this practice reconciled with Sir Charles Wood's principle? In this way. The Government says in effect to the cultivator: My good friend, we assume the cost of cultivation and the profits of agricultural stock to be £4; we assume the economic rent to be £8, and our Land Tax of £4 is therefore half the rent! Is this not

once more, keeping the word of Sir Charles Wood's promise to the ear, and breaking it to the hope?

These details are quite enough. They will give you an idea how the Land Tax is levied in different parts of India, in Bengal, in Northern India, in the Central Provinces and in Southern India. It is the heavy incidence of the Land Tax, and especially its uncertainty, which has a depressing effect on agriculture, which prevents land improvements and any saving, and impoverishes the people. Whatever the Land Tax may be, let it be clear, definite, intelligible. Except in Provinces where it is permanently fixed, the Land Tax is recognized by the British Government, all over India, to be one-half the rent. This rate is recognized by Lord Dalhousie's rule of 1855, by the Court of Director's despatch of 1856, and by Sir Charles Wood's despatch of 1864. This rate is heavy enough in all conscience, but let us at least religiously and conscientiously adhere to this rule, and not seek to evade or exceed it. Thoughtful and moderate Englishmen demand this, and educated and public-spirited Indians desire it also. In December last, a Memorial was signed by a number of retired Indian officials pressing this recommendation on the Secretary of State for India. The Right Honourable Sir Richard Garth, late Chief Justice of Bengal, was one of the signatories; Sir John Jardine, who spoke here last Monday, was another; and several other retired officials, including myself, signed it. The unrepresented people of India demand for the British Government a faithful observance of those clear and definite rules

which were laid down by the Government itself 40 or 50 years ago.

## II. RAILWAYS AND IRRIGATION.

Gentlemen, I now turn from the important subject of the Land Tax to the Railways and Irrigation Works of India. The construction of Railways has, I need hardly remark to this audience been highly beneficial in India, as it is beneficial in every other part of the world. It has shortened distances, made travelling and traffic cheaper, and what is of great importance, it has made transport of food grains from one province to another in times of distress quicker and easier. Nevertheless, railways in India have been constructed with doubtful wisdom out of the revenues of the country, or under guarantee of profits out of such revenues. When the State undertakes railway construction or guarantees profits out of public revenues, the concern is never as paying as when undertaken by private companies on their own risk. And so it happens that the entire railway system in India has resulted, not in profit, but in a total loss of forty million pounds sterling to the revenues of India. This loss has added to the public debt, and the tax-payers of India are paying, year after year, a heavy tax as interest on the debt thus piled up. During the last year there was no loss, because the railway earned much by conveying vast quantities of food grains to the famine-stricken provinces. What was a wide-spread calamity for the people was a gain to the railway. We all hope the famine will not last long; and I much fear the profits of the railways will

disappear with the famine. In any case it is extremely doubtful if the Indian railways will ever make sufficient profits to wipe off the past loss of forty millions ; and generations of Indian tax-payers will continue to bear the burden of taxation in consequence of this loss.

The total length of railways in India open to traffic by the end of 1898 was 22,500 miles. In that year the Indian Famine Commission stated in their published report that the lines required for famine protection purposes had been completed, and that preference should be given to irrigation works in the future. The advice was unheeded. There is a continuous pressure put on the Indian Government by capitalists and speculators for the construction of fresh railway lines out of the Indian revenues. And thus in spite of the advice of the Famine Commission of 1898 and the earlier commission of 1880, the Indian Government has shewn more activity in the construction of railways than in irrigation works. The total length of railways open to traffic up to the end of 1900 was 25,000 miles.

The railway system does not add one single blade of corn to the food supply of the country, while irrigation works double the food supply, save crops, and prevent famines. Nevertheless, while 225 millions sterling have been spent on railways, only 25 millions have been spent on irrigation works. Irrigation works are either canals or storage tanks or wells. Canals are only possible in level tracts of the country, along the basin of large rivers. Storage tanks and wells are possible elsewhere. During a century

and a half of British rule the whole country could have been covered with irrigation works. All provinces, could have been protected against the effect of droughts. The food supply of India could have been increased and made constant; famines and deaths could have been absolutely prevented; loss of revenue could have been obviated. But by a fatal unwisdom and want of foresight, railways have been fostered and irrigation neglected in India. Out of 220 millions acres of cultivated land in India not much over 20 millions are protected by irrigation works. Many of these works are the works of old Hindu Rajas and Mahomedan Governors which have been preserved up to date. If you read Dr. Francis Buchanan's narrative of his journey from Madras through Mysore to Malabar—performed just a hundred years ago—you will find mention of old canals and storage tanks, made and maintained by the old Hindu and Mahomedan rulers, in every part of their dominions. In spite of their frequent wars, in spite of rude systems of Government, they knew the value of irrigation works. If the more enlightened British Government had followed their example in this respect, they could have covered the whole of India with irrigation works within a hundred years, and they could have made famines impossible under British rule. Let us hope they will take the lesson to heart to-day; that they will henceforth devote all the available resources of the Indian Empire to irrigation works, so that famines will be impossible '20 or 30 years hence.

## III. INDUSTRIES AND MANUFACTURES.

I have dwelt so long on agriculture because agriculture is the one national industry of India at the present day. Fourfifths of the population of India depend upon this one industry. Other industries flourished in India in past centuries, but the history of those industries under British rule is a melancholy one ; many of them have declined and some have perished altogether. If you read the account of India in the 17th century written by the eminent Frenchman, Francois Bernier, who resided there many years, you will find that in spite of the arbitrary administration of those days, the people of India were a great manufacturing nation, and exported vast quantities of cotton and silk fabrics to the markets of Asia and of Europe. And if you read the statistical account of Eastern India, recorded a hundred years ago by Dr. Francis Buchanan and edited by Montgomery Martin, you will find that one-half the women population of India found employment in spinning and weaving in those days, and earned something from day to day and from year to year, which they added to the earnings of their husbands, their fathers, or their brothers. It is a lamentable fact that practically the whole of this industry has died out in India, and the profits from this industry are lost to the people. It first declined under the illiberal and ungenerous commercial policy of England in the early part of the nineteenth century, when prohibitive duties were imposed on Indian manufactures exported to Europe,

while English manufacturers were imported into Indian almost duty-free.

"It is a melancholy instance," writes Horace Hayman Wilson, the well-known historian of India, "of the wrong done to India by a country on which she has become dependent. It was stated in evidence (in 1813) that the cotton and silk goods of India up to the period could be sold for a profit in the British market at a price from 50 to 60 per cent. lower than those fabricated in England. It consequently became necessary to protect the latter by duties of 70 and 80 per cent. on their value, or by positive prohibition.....British goods were forced upon her without paying any duty, and the foreign manufacturer employed the arm of political injustice to keep down and ultimately strangle a competitor with whom he could not have contended on equal terms."

Later in the century, the prohibitive duties were abolished, after they had done their fatal work. Hand-looms were replaced all over the world by steam, and steam-mills were started in Calcutta and in Bombay. They prospered for a time, but the imposition of an excise duty on the production of Indian mills in recent years has greatly interfered with their success. It is a duty unknown in any other part of the civilised world; it hampers our infant steam industry, and makes it difficult for us to compete with our Asiatic competitors, Japan and China. It is an unwise and illiberal tax by which the British Government disables its British subjects in India from competing on equal terms with other Asiatic nations in the markets of the world.

What has been said about the spinning and weaving industry of India applies to some extent to other old Indian industries. Dying and the manufactures of dyes, tanning and leather work, working in iron and other metals, the weaving of shawls and carpets, muslins and brocades, the manufacture of paper and stationery articles—all have declined. Millions of the Indian population who made a livelihood from these industries are now compelled to agriculture as the one remaining source of their subsistence ; and responsible statesmen in the present day, in the House of Commons and outside, and trying to think out how they can undo the mischief done in the past, and again diversify Indian industries. I have myself, during the many years of my service under the Indian Government, visited villages and towns which were once the homes of flourishing communities of weavers—those who produced that famous Indian muslin which was once the wonder of Europe. Those villages are now deserted and desolate ; the great lakes excavated in the olden times are silted up ; the temples and religious edifices are in decay ; the streets are covered with jungle ; and the old weaver families have migrated elsewhere to seek a scanty subsistence, and their old ancestral villages know them not.

Gentlemen, you hear very little in this country of this decline of the old national industries of India. Your attention is naturally attracted to those industries only in which British capital is employed. You read of tea and coffee, of indigo and jute, of coal mines and gold mines, which are worked by British Companies. We

wish well to all these industries, for they give employment to hundreds of thousands of Indian labourers. But you cannot improve the condition of the people of India without fostering their own industries, carried on by themselves, in their towns and villages. You cannot add to the wealth of the Indian people except by wise legislation, tending to promote and help their own national undertakings. And unless you improve the material condition of the people of India, they will be but poor customers of your own commodities. Our interests and yours are closely allied and not divergent. If our manufactures were revived, and industrial prosperity once more restored to India, the three hundred million people of India could become the largest customers of your manufactures. But if they remain poor, resourceless, starving agriculturists, all your efforts to increase the consumption of your goods in India will utterly fail. India ought to be the greatest market for British goods ; India could be so, if her people were prosperous under British rule.

#### IV. TRADE.

Under the present circumstances of the people of India, your imports into India show no rapid improvement. The average annual import of merchandise into India, most of which was from Great Britain, was 708 millions of rupees, or 47 million pounds, during the five years ending in 1894. In the succeeding five years ending in 1899 the average annual import into India was 736 millions of rupees or 49 million pounds. An export of 49 million of pounds to a population of 300

millions means a consumption of 3s. per head of the population. If the people of India consumed your goods at the rate of 5s. or 6s. a year per head of population—and this is a moderate estimate even for a poor Asiatic nation—your exports into India would be doubled, and you would carry on a trade with India exceeding your trade with any other country in the world. Therefore, I say that your trade interests and those of the people of India are closely allied and not divergent. It is not by restrictive excise duties on the manufactures of India, nor by draining her resources, that Great Britain can gain in the long run. It is by making the population of India prosperous that your trade with India can prosper.

#### V. FINANCES AND THE ECONOMIC DRAIN.

Gentlemen, I have spoken to you of the agriculture and the Land Tax of India, of her railways and irrigation works, of her industries and trade. I have only one word to add about the financial administration of India. The net revenues of India for the current year have been estimated at 42 millions sterling. Roughly speaking you can say that 20 millions out of this comes from Land Revenue, 20 millions from other taxes including Salt, and two millions from Opium. In other words, the trades and industries of the country bring little revenue, because the trades and industries are on the decline—one half the revenue of the country is tax on land and tax on salt, and is raised from the food of the poor. If you examine the figures thus closely, you will

find how little reason there is for congratulation on the increase of revenues in India; that increase does not mean increasing prosperity, but only an oppressively increasing taxation on the food supply of the people. Twenty-six years ago, our present Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, was Secretary of State for India, and condemned in the strongest terms this undue taxing of the food of the people. He wrote in 1876 :

“ So far as it is possible to change the Indian system, it is desirable that the cultivator should pay a smaller proportion of the whole national charge. It is not in itself a thrifty policy to draw the mass of revenue from the rural districts where capital is scarce..... The injury is exaggerated in the case of India, where so much of the revenue is exorted without a direct equivalent. As India must be bled, the lancet should be directed to the part where the blood is congested, or at least sufficient, not to those which are already feeble from the want of it.”

These remarks of Lord Salisbury apply with greater force than they did 26 years ago. You are bleeding the agricultural population of India at a time when they are suffering from repeated, continuous and widespread famines; and you are exporting a larger portion of that revenue out of India without a direct equivalent to-day, than you did 26 years ago. You are draining India annually of sixteen millions sterling for what are called “Home charges”; while the total of charges which India has to remit annually to this country without a direct equivalent is over twenty millions! Do you think that any country can prosper under such a system

of finance? Do you think Great Britain or the United States, or Germany or France or any other country could prosper if an amount equal to one half of her annual revenues was sent out of the country, year after year, to be spent in a foreign country? Do you think England is doing justice to India under a financial arrangement through which the food of 20 millions of people in India is annually sent away to England without a direct equivalent?

I have said the net revenue of India for the current year is estimated at 42 millions. The expenditure, roughly speaking is this: 17 millions for the Army, 17 millions for the Civil services, and 8 millions more for other charges. Of all these three heads the cost of the Army is felt to be most unjust and oppressive, because the great army maintained in India is not merely for the defence of India but for the defence of Great Britain's possessions in Asia and in Africa. 30,000 troops were lately sent out of India to China and to South Africa; and this proves beyond a doubt that the Indian Army is maintained as much for Imperial purposes as for India. That being so, it is only just and fair that Great Britain should pay a portion of the cost of the army maintained in India, and not try to run her empire on the cheap by throwing the whole cost of the Army on the unrepresented and famine-stricken population of India.

## VI. FAMINES AND THEIR REMEDIES.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for listening so patiently and with so much interest to this account of

the economic condition of India. It is a subject of the greatest importance ; I do not think there is a question of graver import connected with any part of the British Empire than the present condition of India. Called upon to deal with the subject within the limits of one speech, I should have but ill discharged my duty if I had merely gleaned some facts and figures from official reports, and placed them before you without explaining their bearing on the condition of the people of India. Great Britain can look back on the past history of Indian administration—if not with unalloyed satisfaction—at least with legitimate pride. If blunders have been committed in the past, much good work too has been well and honestly done. Great Britain has restored peace and security of property to the vast population of India after a century of disorder and disturbance. Great Britain has introduced into India Western methods of education which have had the happiest results among an ancient and intellectual people. And if Great Britain has too hastily and unwisely swept aside some of our old self-governing institutions, she is making us familiar with newer methods of enlightened administration. These are results which we can contemplate with just pride and sincere satisfaction ; but there are matters in which the success of British rule has not been so conspicuous ; and we cannot honestly feel the same satisfaction in contemplating the economic condition of the people of India in the present day. No impartial observer in India, no unprejudiced critic in this country, can think of the wretched and almost universal poverty of the vast population of India

without a feeling of commiseration and sorrow, or can read of the frequent and fatal famines of that country without a feeling of pain and of humiliation. These are facts which tell their own tale ; roseate pictures of Indian prosperity, so often painted and so sedulously circulated, convince no one, and deceive no one. To you, such representations of Indian prosperity appear like an endeavour to conceal defects in administration which should be remedied and not concealed ; to the mass of my countrymen, who live in a chronic state of poverty of which you have no conception, such roseate pictures painted in this country appear like an unfeeling mockery of their misfortunes. The evil is undoubtedly there ; Englishmen and English women desire to know the reasons of the frequent and fatal famines in the past ; and they desire also to see no more of them in the future. Therefore, standing before you tonight to speak of the economic condition of my country, I have sought to lay before you, as clearly as I could within my brief limits, the causes of this undoubted evil, and the remedies which are needed. Moderate the Land Tax within reasonable and intelligible limits ; extend irrigation works all over India ; revive the industries and manufactures of the people ; reduce the financial drain which is impoverishing India ; and admit the people themselves into some reasonable share in the control of the administration of their own concerns ; and you will hear as little of famines in India in the future, as you hear of famines in Great Britain or famines in the city of Glasgow. An Empire has its

responsibilities as well as its glory ; and the happiness and advancement of the people of India are the highest responsibilities of Great Britain and her most glorious mission in the east.

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## IX. INDIAN AGRICULTURE.

[*Paper read at Mansfield House, Canning Town, London,  
October 27, 1901.*]

ON Sunday, October 27, Mr. Romesh Dutt, C.I.E., formerly of the Indian Civil Service, delivered a lecture at Mansfield House, Canning Town, London, upon "Indian Agriculture." There was an excellent audience, and the meeting proved most successful.

MR. DUTT said :—The subject of my lecture this evening is Indian Agriculture. The subject is one of great importance, because, as you are all aware, India is a vast continent equal in extent and population to the whole continent of Europe, if you leave out Russia. And the people of this great continent of India is mainly agricultural. You in England were also mainly an agricultural people over a hundred years ago, and by far the greater part of Englishmen lived with their families in farms. But your splendid supply of coal and iron gave you a start in industries after the invention of steam, and long before the middle of the nineteenth century you had distanced all other countries of the earth in the extent and the excellence of your manufactures. The result was that you gradually neglected your agriculture and swarmed to towns and factories till at the present time more than half the population of England live in towns and depend

on trades and industries, and you buy your corn and vegetables, and even meat, mostly from other nations. I do not myself know if this state of things is good for a nation, or if it can be permanent. Already your supremacy in trades and manufactures is threatened by the rivalry of Germany and America, and what those nations will ultimately achieve no man can foresee.

We in India have gone to the opposite extreme. If you have depended too much on your manufactures, we have depended too much on our agriculture, and four-fifths of the great population of India depend directly or indirectly on the produce of the soil. Our national industries, specially spinning and weaving, have declined within the last hundred years, firstly through the illiberal policy of the East India Company, and secondly by competition with the steam and machinery of Europe. Agriculture is our one national industry now ; if agriculture prospers, the people are well off ; if crops fail, there is famine in the land.

I myself believe that a civilised nation prospers best if it is mindful both of its agriculture and its industries. And I also believe that both England and India will need some re-adjustment of their industries in the near future. You in this country will have to be more mindful of your agriculture with the growing competition of other nations in various industries. And we in India will have to develop our manufactures by the help of steam and machinery, so as not to be entirely dependent on our crops. The soil is the gift of Heaven to each nation as well as skill in manufactures ; and it is

a healthy state of things when a large proportion of a nation are engaged in cultivating the soil, while a fairly large proportion of them are also engaged in industries.

In speaking now of our agricultural system in India, I must premise by informing you that our land system is entirely different from yours in England. You are familiar with the landlord who owns his estate, the farmer who takes lease of his farm, and the labourer who tills the soil and is paid by wages. Our system is just the opposite of this. \*It is the tiller in India who virtually owns his holding of five or ten acres, who inherits it from his father, sells or mortgages it at will, and hands it down to his sons when he dies. Sometimes the tiller pays a rent to a superior landlord; in other instances there is no superior landlord, and the tiller pays the land tax direct to the State. But in both cases the humble tiller is the virtual proprietor of his small holding; and as long as he pays his tax or his rent, he cannot be evicted from his heritable and transferable property. †I cannot but think that this ancient land system of India is better than your modern English system; for the soil in India belongs to the nation, and not to a few individuals.

#### SKILL AND INDUSTRY OF INDIAN CULTIVATORS.

\*It is generally believed in this country that the Indian tiller, whom we call a Ryot, is a thoughtless primitive creature, ignorant of his own interests, antiquated in his methods of agriculture, and altogether a

poor relic of the prehistoric past whom it is necessary to instruct and to modernise.\* Impressed with this idea the Government of India<sup>†</sup> have often been fired by the benevolent desire to teach the Indian cultivator better methods of cultivation ; but before they proceeded very far, the Government discovered that they had more to learn than to teach. They<sup>‡</sup> found out that under the local conditions of India, it was scarcely possible to improve on the methods which the Indian agriculturist had adopted from the experience of thousands of years ; and that while it was possible to improve the supply of water and the supply of manure, it was scarcely possible to improve on the art of growing wheat and rice which the Indian cultivator practised. § This is generally the opinion expressed by English scientists who have carefully examined the systems of Indian agriculture. As early as 1832, Dr. Wallick, who was Superintendent of the East India Company's Botanical Gardens at Calcutta, gave his evidence before a Committee of the House of Commons to this effect : "The Bengal husbandry, although in many respects extremely simple, and preñival in its mode and form, yet is not so low as people generally suppose it to be ; and I have often found that very sudden innovations in them have never led to any good results. I have known for instance European iron ploughs introduced into Bengal with a view to superseding the extremely tedious and superficial turning of the ground by the common Bengal plough. But what has been the result ? That the soil which is extremely superficial.....has geperally received the

admixture of the under soil, which has deteriorated it very much." And with reference to rice cultivation in Bengal, Dr. Wallick remarked: "If we were to live another thousand years, we should hardly see any improvement in that branch of cultivation."

This was said nearly seventy years ago; and let us turn to a more recent opinion,—the latest scientific opinion that is available to us. Dr. Voelcker, consulting chemist to the Royal Agricultural Society of England, was sent out to India in 1889 to enquire into Indian agriculture, and submitted a report which is the most valuable and authoritative work we have on that subject. And at the very commencement of his report, Dr. Voelcker bears his testimony to the skill of the Indian agriculturist in these words:—"The ideas generally entertained in England, and often given expression to even in India, that Indian agriculture is, as a whole, primitive and backward, and that little has been done to try and remedy it, are altogether erroneous.....Taking everything together, and more specially considering the conditions under which Indian crops are grown, they are wonderfully good. At his best, the Indian Rayat or cultivator is quite as good as, and in some respects the superior of, the average British farmer; while at his worst it can only be said that this state is brought about largely by an absence of facilities for improvement which is probably unequalled in any other country, and that the Rayat will struggle on patiently and uncomplainingly in the face of difficulties in a way that no one else would. Nor need our British farmers be surprised at what I say,

for it may be remembered that the Natives of India were cultivators of wheat centuries before we in England were. It is not likely, therefore, that their practice should be capable of much improvement. What does, however prevent them from growing larger crops is the limited facilities to which they have access, such as the supply of water and manure. But to take the ordinary acts of of husbandry, nowhere would one find better instances of keeping land scrupulously clean from weeds, of ingenuity in device of water-raising appliances, of knowledge of soils and their capabilities, as well as the exact time to sow and to reap, as one would in Indian agriculture, and this not at its best alone, but at its ordinary level. It is wonderful, too, how much is known of rotation, the system of mixed crops, and of fallowing. Certain it is that I, at least, have never seen a more perfect picture of careful cultivation, combined with hard labour."

#### MIXED CROPS AND ROTATION.

A few words will explain the system of mixed crops and of rotation, as practised in India. A grain crop like Juar is often put on the ground with a leguminous crop like Arhar. The grain crop grows rapidly and keeps the other back, and when it is reaped the leguminous crop extends itself, grows apace, and in due time is reaped. This system is followed year after year, and while to the casual observer it seems like a continuous cropping, there is really a perfect system of rotation all the time. Sometimes three or even four kinds of seed are sown

at the same time, for instance, wheat, barley, grain, and rape seed. Wheat and grain often occur together, so also wheat and linseed. Sometimes again the mixed cropping is more complicated than even this. For instance there are deep-rooted plants, and there are surface feeders which grow together, drawing their nourishment from different layers of the same soil; there are plants which require shelter, and will not thrive without the friendly neighbourhood of other plants. All this is clearly understood by the Indian cultivator—the heir to the knowledge and experience of thousands of years of tilling—who to the casual British observer appears so ignorant, so improvident, so like a relic of the prehistoric past.

The one crop with which rotation is seldom practised is rice. The reason is that rice grows best on soil the fertility of which is annually renewed by the silt of inundating rivers. The Ganges and the other great rivers of India not only bring their annual supply of water to thirsty crops, but also bring a vast amount of fertilizing silt which they gently deposit on the soil—the finest and richest manure provided by Nature, over millions of acres, without the toil of man. To utilize this manure, the Indian cultivator practises surface ploughing only; any deep ploughing, such as is practised in England, and which has been sometimes stupidly tried in India, only destroys this manure, and turns up the sand below. Over this inundated and annually renewed soil, rice grows year after year without the need of mixed cropping or rotation. Yet I have

seen some mixed cropping on such lands also ; the rice ripens early, and is reaped early ; and the oil seed or pulse sown with it then flourishes in the winter months, and is reaped in February and March.

These few remarks will illustrate the skill and knowledge of the Indian cultivator, and the suitability of his methods and implements to the local conditions of India. 'Deep ploughing would be injurious to Indian cultivation ; and steam ploughs are out of the question where the average field is from half an acre to three or four acres. And I, for one, do not wish to see these small holdings enlarged. The land in India belongs to the nation ; each petty cultivator is provided for with his three or four or ten acres ; and I would not like to see these humble cultivators squeezed out by capitalists, and small fields turned into extensive areas of cultivation.'

I may only add here that where improvements are possible, consistently with the Indian land system and cultivation, they are eagerly adopted by the so-called thoughtless and primitive Indian cultivator. I have myself seen the Indian sugar-grower discarding his awkward sugar mill and adopting a mill invented by Europeans in India, which pressed the cane better, and produced more sugar. Teach him to make cheaper manure or to make better appliances for the supply of water ; teach him to make a better selection of seeds, or a cheaper method of threshing ; and he will adopt your improvements quickly enough. But propose to him reforms inconsistent with the conditions of Indian

agriculture and Indian peasant life, and he will decline your advice<sup>7</sup> with thanks.

#### GEOLOGICAL TYPES OF SOIL.

Having spoken so far of the Indian cultivator, I wish to say one word more of his skill in distinguishing the different kinds of soil suitable for different crops. There are an infinite variety of soils in India, but nevertheless the geological types of soil may be classified into three broad classes. The Alluvial Soil predominates over the whole of Northern India, along the basin of the Indus and the Ganges, and consists of mud and sand. Away in the west, virtually throughout the province of Bombay, a basaltic formation called the Black Cotton Soil predominates, and is peculiarly fitted for the growth of cotton, for which Western India has always been famous. And all along the East and South, from the hills of Chota Nagpur and Orissa, right through the dominions of the Nizam of Hyderabad, to the undulating plains of Madras, Mysore, and Travancore, the Red Soil predominates, consisting of archæan and metamorphic rocks. These are the three grand geological divisions of the Indian soil ; but as I have said before, there are endless varieties within these three classes ; and nothing can exceed the skill with which the Indian cultivator distinguishes the different varieties of soil suitable for different varieties of crops. Chemistry and modern science have yet added nothing to the skill, acquired through the local experience of centuries.

## WANT OF MANURE.

• The great need for improvement in Indian agriculture is not new implements and new methods of cultivation, but a sufficient supply of manure and a sufficient supply of irrigation water. There is great apprehension in the minds of thoughtful and scientific observers that the soil of India is being exhausted, not through ignorance of rotation or proper methods of cultivation, but through the failure of manure. Cattle manure has always been, and is to this day, the universal fertiliser of Indian lands, and the only cheap and available manure. But with the destruction of forests and scarcity of firewood in these days, cattle manure is now largely dried and made into cakes for use as fuel, and thus the supply of manure for land is growing less and less. You can go to no part of India without seeing thousands of women drying these manure cakes, and taking them on their heads to towns for sale as fuel; and all that is thus consumed in towns as fuel is a loss to the country and to production. Dr. Voelcker has recorded: "As the result of my enquires I feel I may safely assert that where the practice of burning dung as fuel prevails among the genuine cultivators, it arises, in eight cases out of ten, from the scarcity of firewood." This is a serious and a growing evil; and the only possible remedy for it is in the hands of the Indian Government. Forests must be preserved, not merely for the sake of the valuable timber which is now the principal care of forest officers, but also for the supply of sufficient and

cheap firewood for all the cultivators in the country. The rules of the forest department must be brought more in touch with the needs of the agricultural population ; and the people must be allowed to obtain—as they always did obtain in past centuries—an ample supply of firewood from jungles, so that their cattle manure may be saved for its proper purpose.

Another cause of the failure of manure in India is the vast exportation of oil seeds from the country to Europe. Under the present system of administration, India has to remit to England a large sum, estimated at over twenty millions annually, without any direct equivalent. This not only impoverishes the people of India directly, but it impoverishes the soil of the country, which is now virtually the sole means of the subsistence of the people. For a large portion of the remittance has to be made up by the exportation of oil seeds. If the oil was manufactured in India, and then exported, the evil would be less ; for the oil itself has no manurial properties. But to export the entire seed, or the refuse after the removal of the oil is, in the words of Dr. Voelcker, “to export the soil’s fertility.”

#### WANT OF WATER.

\* Another great need for Indian agriculture is the want of a sufficient supply of water. Except in tracts of lands which are annually inundated by rivers, crops in India depend on the annual rainfall or on irrigation works. The rainfall is always uncertain, and so in old times Hindu Rajas and Mahomedan Emperors construc-

ted vast irrigation works, the remains of which you will find not only in the basins of the Jumna and the Indus, but also in Southern India. Many of these works have been preserved and added to by the British Government ; but sufficient attention has not been paid within the last hundred years to constructing new irrigation works. Too much attention has been paid to railways for facilitating the export and import trade of England with India ; too little attention has been paid to irrigation for facilitating the agriculture of the people of India. 225 millions sterling have been spent on railways ; and only 25 millions have been spent on irrigation works. And thus it happens that out of over 220 million acres of cultivated land in India, not much over 20 millions are protected by irrigation works. I am glad to find, however, that recent famines have at last disturbed the conscience of the India Government ; and that a Commission, headed by an eminently qualified man, has just been appointed to enquire into this much neglected subject.

• The irrigation works required in the different provinces of India are of different kinds. In the alluvial basins of the Ganges and the Indus, the most suitable irrigation works are CANALS fed from these rivers, and distributing their water through tributaries to the surrounding country. In many parts of Northern India not irrigated by the rivers, the most suitable works are WELLS, and some help and encouragement to their construction have lately been given to the people by that ablest of the present Indian administrators, Sir Anthony

MacDonnell. In Bengal, where the rainfall is copious, and the fields are often inundated by rivers, SHALLOW PONDS excavated in the fields are the most suitable irrigation works ; and I have seen such ponds, excavated by the old Rajas of the country, two or three miles in circumference, the like of which has never been done in recent times. Away in Madras and Southern India where the soil is undulating, and the underlying rock helps the retention of water, the most suitable irrigation works are RESERVOIRS made by constructing large embankments, and thus impounding all the water descending from the hill slopes. Some of the most magnificent works of this kind, constructed by the old Polygars of Madras, were seen by Dr. Francis Buchanan in his journey through Southern India a hundred years ago. If such works had been multiplied within these hundred years, faminies would have been less frequent and less disastrous than they are to-day. ⑥

#### AFFORESTATION.

Gentlemen, it may sound somewhat strange, but it is nevertheless a fact, that the needed humidity of the soil is closely connected with the preservation of trees and forests. The question whether large forests and plantations cause and increase the rainfall has often been discussed, and I will not enter into that debateable matter. But there can be no doubt that forests and large plantations, by lowering the temperature, cause the rain to descend in gentle showers, where the clouds would otherwise pass on, or burst in

wasteful torrents. Thus, if trees do not cause rainfall, they certainly distribute the rain; if they do not increase the quantity of rain, they certainly increase the number of rainy days. It has been noticed that in one station in southern India, that of Utakamand, the total number of rainy days in five years, from 1870 to 1874—excluding the monsoon months—was 374. This was when the station was bare of woods. Since then, trees have been planted and the place is well wooded now, and the total number of rainy days in the five years from 1886 to 1890,—excluding the monsoon months—was no less than 416. This increase in the number of rainy days is a great advantage to agriculture, even if there be no difference in the actual quantity of annual rainfall.

#### WANT OF PASTURE LAND.

You will see, therefore, that forests are required, not only for supplying fuel to the agricultural population, but also for distributing and utilising the rains. Another great use of forests and jungles is to supply grazing lands for cattle. In olden times, most villages in India had their adjoining jungle or waste lands for the grazing of cattle, and such lands, pertaining to each village, were used by the villagers in common. The great increase in the area of cultivation in recent times has led to the enclosing of these commons, as you would describe the process in England, until the want of sufficient pasture lands has become a real and grave difficulty. When the crops have been reaped, the cattle are let loose on the

fields; but in other months they are fed on straw and fodder procured with difficulty. This growing evil has come to the notice of the Government. Up to 1880, wrote Mr. Nicholson of Coimbatore, every tenant used to hold one-fifth of his farm as pasture at one quarter the usual assessment; but this salutary rule was abolished at the new Settlement of 1880. In 1883 the Government of India recorded a resolution that the cultivated area in India had steadily increased at the expense of the grazing area. And in 1890 Sir D. Brandis recorded that in Madras the working plans for the fuel and fodder reserves should contain proposals for throwing open certain forest areas to grazing. Adequate measures, however, have not yet been taken, and the subject is one which requires the closest attention, both of the Government and of private landlords.

#### AN UNCERTAIN LAND-TAX.

<sup>a</sup> The last evil from which agriculture suffers in India is an uncertain land-tax. <sup>b</sup> You are aware that in England the Government levied a high tax of four shillings in the pound, or 20 per cent. of the rental, during the wars of the early years of the eighteenth century; and this was reduced to two shillings, and then to one shilling in the pound, or 5 per cent. of the rental, after the Peace of Utrecht. The land tax in England varied between these limits for about a hundred years, till it was made permanent and redeemable by the great minister, William Pitt, in 1798. In India the land tax was made permanent only in Bengal and a few other places. In Northern India, after many blundering and oppressive experiments,

the land tax was fixed in 1855, not at 5 per cent. of the rental, but at 50 per cent. of the rental; and in Southern India, too, the same general rule of levying the land tax at 50 per cent of the rent was recognised in 1864. You will consider this rate both excessive and oppressive; but the worst of it is that even this heavy rate is not strictly adhered to. In Northern India, the Government sought to levy 50 per cent., not on the current rental, but on the prospective rental of estates; and a great many minor taxes are assessed on the land in addition to the land tax. In the Central Provinces of India the rule of levying 50 per cent of the rental as tax was evaded in 1863 and openly abandoned in 1888; and a higher tax was levied. And in Southern India, *i. e.*, in Bombay and Madras, the tax which is levied from the cultivators often approximates to 100 per cent. of the economic rent. Fresh Settlements are being continually made in different parts of India; neither the landlord nor the cultivator knows what the State demand will be after each new settlement; and this uncertainty deadens agricultural energy, and prevents agricultural improvements. What is wanted for the improvement of agriculture in India is a clear intelligible limit to the land tax—a limit which will not be evaded or altered by the whims and fancies of Settlement officers and Provincial rulers. 50 per cent. of the rental or the economic rent is the rule theoretically recognised in all parts of India where the land tax has not been permanently fixed; and it is a heavy tax for an agricultural nation to pay. But something would be gained even if

this heavy rate was religiously adhered to, and was not evaded and exceeded, as it now constantly is, at each recurring Settlement in many parts of India. Nothing can be more fatal to agricultural prosperity, nothing is more destructive to agricultural improvements, than any uncertainty in the State demand from the soil.<sup>9</sup>

Gentlemen, I thank you for the patient hearing which you have given me on a subject which is not altogether familiar to you. But it is a subject of the greatest importance to the prosperity and well-being of India, and to three hundred millions of your fellow-subjects. The Indian Government commands ability, knowledge, and experience, but is not in touch with the lives of the vast Indian population. There are no Indian members either in the Secretary of State's Council in London, or in the Viceroy's Executive Council in India; and questions, involving military operations or the revenue, naturally receive more attention than questions involving the well-being and the prosperity of the unrepresented nation. It is a truism that there can be no government for the good of a people without some sort of representation; and the Indian Government will fail to secure the happiness of the Indian people until there is some representation of the popular opinion in the Executive Councils of the Empire. The economic condition of the people of India will never be improved until the people themselves are permitted a reasonable share in the administration of their own concerns.

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## X. INDIAN MANUFACTURES.

*[Paper read before the Sukha Samiti London,  
on December 20th, 1901.]*

THE decline of Indian manufactures and indigenous industries within the last 150 years is one of the saddest episodes of British Rule in India, and presents one of the most difficult economic problems to Indian administrators at the dawn of a new century.

India was known from ancient times, not only as a great agricultural but also as one of the greatest manufacturing countries in the world. Egypt and Babylon in the palmy days of their civilisation largely imported Indian manufactures ; and Phœnycian and Arabian merchants navigated the Red Sea to convey the produce of the Indian loom into the markets of the west. Later on, Constantinople and Alexandria became the great centres of the Indian trade ; and as they declined under the rule of the Turks, Venice became the proudest seaport of Europe, and displayed before the rude barons of Germany, France and England the valuable products of Indian industry.

The success of Venice aroused the jealousy of other nations, and they endeavoured to find out a new path to India. Columbus discovered America in endeavouring to discover a new route to India, and Vasco da Gama at last succeeded in finding a way round the Cape of Good Hope. This was the main cause of the fall of

Venice and the rise of Portugal. Throughout the sixteenth century Portugal monopolised the trade of the East; and nearly all the important trade centres in Eastern Africa, in Arabia and Persia, in India and the Indian Archipelago, were in the possession of the Portuguese. Holland rose in power after the great war of independence, early in the seventeenth century, and the Dutch were the most successful traders with India in that century. A French traveller, Bernier, who resided in India for many years during the seventeenth century, speaks of vast quantities of cotton and silk fabrics manufactured by the weavers of India which were shipped annually by the Dutch merchants for the markets of Europe. Millions of Indian artisans found employment and earned an income from weaving these fabrics; and it is scarcely an exaggeration to state that there was hardly a village in India in those days where women did not earn something from spinning and weaving, in addition to what their husbands and fathers earned from agriculture and other industries.

The Dutch declined in power in the eighteenth century, and France and England strove for supremacy in India. The contest was finally decided by the peace of Paris in 1763, which left the British supreme in Bengal and in Madras, with the important port of Bombay in their possession on the western Coast. Two years after this, the East India Company obtained from the Great Mogul a formal charter as Dewan or Administrators of Bengal and the Northern Circars.

The East India Company then pursued a policy

different from what all preceding traders had done. Not content with the trade of India, they desired to discourage the manufactures of India, in order to encourage the manufactures of England.

As early as 1769, the Directors of the Company wished the manufacture of raw silk to be encouraged in Bengal, and that of silk fabrics discouraged. And they also directed that silk weavers should be made to work in the Company's factories, and prohibited from working outside "under severe penalties, by the authority of the Government."<sup>1</sup> This mandate had its desired effect. The manufacture of silk and cotton goods declined in India, and the people who had exported these goods to the markets of Europe and Asia in previous centuries began to import them in increasing quantities. The following figures <sup>2</sup> shew the value of cotton goods alone, sent out from England to ports east of the Cape of Good Hope, mainly to India, during twenty years.

| Year ending<br>5th January. £ | Year ending<br>5th January. £ |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1794. . . . . 156             | 1804. . . . . 5,936           |
| 1795. . . . . 717             | 1805. . . . . 31,943          |
| 1796. . . . . 112             | 1806. . . . . 48,525          |
| 1797. . . . . 2501            | 1807. . . . . 46,549          |
| 1798. . . . . 4,436           | 1808. . . . . 69,841          |
| 1799. . . . . 7,317           | 1809. . . . . 118,408         |
| 1800. . . . . 19,575          | 1810. . . . . 74,695          |
| 1801. . . . . 21,200          | 1811. . . . . 114,649         |
| 1802. . . . . 16,191          | 1812. . . . . 107,306         |
| 1803. . . . . 27,876          | 1813. . . . . 108,824         |

(1) *General Letter*, dated 17th, March 1769.

(2) *Return to an order of the House of Commons* dated 4th May 1813.

The Company's Charter was renewed in 1813. An enquiry was made, and witnesses were examined previous to this renewal. Very important witnesses like Warren Hastings, Thomas Munro, and Sir John Malcolm were examined; and the House of Commons shewed the utmost concern for the general welfare of the people of India. But in respect of the Indian manufactures, they sought to discover how they could be replaced by British manufactures, and how British industries could be promoted on the ruins of Indian industries.

Warren Hastings who had been Governor General in India for nearly twelve years was the most important witness examined. Notwithstanding his blunders and mis-rule in India, he had carried away with him a lively idea of the many virtues of the people of that country, and he boldly stated his opinion before the Committee of the House of Lords. "I affirm by the oath that I have taken," he said "that this description of them [that the people of India were in a state of moral turpitude] is untrue and wholly unfounded. \* \* \* They are gentle, benevolent, more susceptible of gratitude shewn them than prompted to revenge for wrongs inflicted, and as exempt from the worst properties of human passion as any people on the face of the earth." And asked by the Commons Committee as to whether the Indian people were likely to consume British manufactures, he replied: "The supplies of trade are for the wants and luxuries of a people; the poor in India may be said to have no wants. Their wants are confined to their dwellings, to their food, and to a scanty portion of clothing, all of

which they can have from the soil that they tread upon."<sup>3</sup>

Sir John Malcolm who had lived a good deal among the people of India, and knew them as few Englishmen have known them since, bore high testimony to the many virtues of the nation. Speaking of Northern India, he said: "The Hindoo inhabitants are a race of men, generally speaking, not more distinguished by their lofty stature \* \* \* than they are for some of the finest qualities of the mind; they are brave, generous, and humane, and their truth is as remarkable as their courage." And replying to the question as to whether they were likely to be consumers of British goods, he replied: "They are not likely to become consumers of European goods, because they do not possess the means to purchase them even if from their present simple habits of life and attire, they required them."<sup>4</sup>

Græme Mercer, who had served the East India Company as a doctor, and also in the revenue and political departments, described the people of India as "mild in their dispositions, polished in their general manners, in their domestic relations kind and affectionate, submissive to authority, and peculiarly attached to their religious tenets, and to the observance of the rites and ceremonies prescribed by those tenets." And in reference to the introduction of European goods in India he deposed that Lord Wellesley had endeavoured to find markets for such goods by instituting fairs in Rohilkhand, exhi-

(3) *Minutes of Evidence on the affairs of the E. I. Company* 1813 p. 3.

(4) *Ibid.*, pages 54 and 57.

biting British wollens in those fairs, and by directing the British Resident to attend the great fair at Hardwar with the same object.<sup>6</sup>

But the most important witness examined by the Committee of the House of Commons on this memorable occasion was Thomas Munro; and the whole of his evidence is inspired by that sympathy with the people of India, and that appreciation of their virtues, which had distinguished that gifted Scotchman during his 27 years' work in India, from 1780 to 1807.

Munro said that the average wages of agricultural labour in India were between 4 shillings and 6 shillings a month; that the cost of subsistence was between 18 shillings and 27 shillings the head per annum; that there was no probability of extending the sale of British wollen goods because the people used coarse-wollen of their own manufacture; and that they were excellent manufactures and were likely to imitate English goods. Asked if Hindu women were not slaves to their husbands, Munro replied: "They have as much influence in their families, as I imagine, the women have in this country" [England]. And asked if the civilisation of the Hindus could not be improved by the establishment of an open trade, he gave that memorable answer which has often been quoted and will bear repetition: "I do not understand what is meant by the civilisation of the Hindus; in the higher branches of science, in the knowledge of the theory and practice

(6) *Ibid.*, pages 88 and 89.

of good government, and in education which, by banishing prejudice and superstition, opens the mind to receive instruction of every kind from every quarter, they are much inferior to Europeans. But if a good system of agriculture ; unrivalled manufacturing skill ; a capacity to produce whatever can contribute to convenience or luxury ; schools established in every village for teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic ; the general practice of hospitality and charity amongst each other ; and above all, a treatment of the female sex, full of confidence, respect, and delicacy ; are among the signs which denote a civilised people, then the Hindus are not inferior to the nations of Europe ; and if civilisation is to become an article of trade between the two countries, I am convinced that this country [England] will gain by the import cargo."<sup>6</sup>

Munro had a high idea of the excellence of the Indian manufactures of his time. Among the causes which precluded the extended sale of British goods in India he mentioned "the religious and civil habits of the natives, and more than anything else, I am afraid, the excellence of their own manufactures." He had used an Indian Shawl for seven years, and found very little difference in it after that long use ; while with regard to imitation shawls produced in England he said : "I have never seen an European Shawl that I would use, even if it were given to me as a present"<sup>7</sup>

The evidence of one other witness deserves mention,

6<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, pages 124, 127, 131.

7 *Ibid*, pages 123 and 172.

that of John Stracey. He had served the East India Company in the Judicial department, and as Under Secretary to Government on the Bengal establishment; and he deposed that the Indian labourer earned from 3 shillings and 6 pence, to 7 shillings and 6 pence a month. How could such a nation use European goods? "I do not know that they use anything in their ordinary use from Europe, except it is some small wollens and broad cloths which they may have accidentally got at a cheap rate." <sup>8</sup>

Enquiries like these fairly disclosed the objects of the House of Commons Committee. It is not in human nature for any race of men to sacrifice their own interests for another race; and the British statesmen in the early years of the nineteenth century did all they could to promote British industries at the sacrifice of Indian industries. British manufactures were forced into India through the agency of the Company's Governor General and Commercial Residents; while Indian manufactures were shut out from England by prohibitive tariffs. The evidence of John Ranking a merchant, examined by the Commons Committee, will explain this.

"Can you state what is the *ad valorem* duty on piece goods sold at the East India House?"

"The duty on the class called Calicos is £3. 6s. 8d. per cent. upon importation; and if they are used for home consumption, there is a further duty of £68. 6s. 8d. per cent.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, page 205.

"There is another class called Muslins, on which the duty on importation is 10 per cent. ; and if they are used for home consumption, of £27. 6s. 3d. per cent.

"There is a third class, Coloured Goods, which are prohibited being used in this country, upon which there is a duty upon importation of £3. 6s. 8d. per cent they are only for exportation.

"This session of Parliament there has been a new duty of 20 per cent on the consolidated duties, which will make the duties on Calicoes \* \* used for home consumption £78. 6s. 8d. per cent. ; upon the Muslins for home consumption £31. 6s. 8d."

There was no thought of concealing the real object of these prohibitive duties. The same witness, Joseph Ranking said, further on, "I look upon it as a protecting duty to encourage our own manufactures." "

What was the result of these duties on Indian manufactures ? Henry St. George Tucker was himself a Director of the East India Company ; and he does not conceal the scope and the effect of England's commercial policy towards India. Writing in 1823, i. e. only ten years after the date of the Parliamentary enquiry referred to above, he condemned that policy in the strongest manner.

"What is the commercial policy which we have adopted in this country with relation to India ? The silk manufactures and its piece-goods made of silk and cotton intermixed have long since been excluded alto

gether from our markets ; and of late, partly in consequence of the operation of a duty of 67 per cent., but chiefly from the effect of superior machinery, the cotton fabrics which hitherto constituted the staple of India, have not only been displaced in this country, but we actually export our cotton manufactures to supply a part of the consumption of our Asiatic possessions. India is thus reduced from the state of a manufacturing to that of an agricultural country." <sup>10</sup>

Still more emphatic is the impartial verdict of H. H. Wilson, the historian of India.

"It is also a melancholy instance of the wrong done to India by the country on which she has become dependent. It was stated in evidence [in 1813] that the cotton and silk goods of India up to the period could be sold for a profit in the British market at a price from 50 to 60% lower than those fabricated in England. It consequently became necessary to protect the latter by duties of 70% and 80% on their value, or by positive prohibition. Had this not been the case, had not such prohibitory duties and decrees existed, the mills of Paisley and Manchester would have been stopped in their outset, and could not have been again set in motion, even by the power of steam. They were created by the sacrifice of the Indian manufactures. Had India been independent, she would have retaliated ; would have imposed prohibitive duties upon British goods, and would thus have preserved her own productive

<sup>(10)</sup> *Memorials of the Indian Government, being a selection from the papers of Henry St. George Tucker.* London, 1853, p. 494.

industry from annihilation. This act of self-defence was not permitted her; she was at the mercy of the stranger. British goods were forced upon her without paying duty, and the foreign manufacturer employed the arm of political injustice to keep down and ultimately strangle a competitor with whom he could not have contended on equal terms." <sup>11</sup>

The duties which were imposed on the import of Indian manufactures into England between 1812 and 1832 on various articles of trade are shewn in the following table. <sup>12</sup>

(11) *Mill's History of British India*, Wilson's continuation, Book 16 Chapter VIII, Note.

(12) *Evidence taken before the Commons Committee*, 1832, Vol. II.

|   | 1812  | 1824  | 1832                  |
|---|---|---|-----------------------|
| Ornamental Cane Work                          |   |   |                       |
| Muslins                                       | 71  | 50  | 30 Per cent on value. |
| Calicoes                                      | 27½   | 37½   | 10 " "                |
| Other cotton manufactures                     | 71½   | 67½   | 10 " "                |
| Goat's wool Shawls                            | 27½   | 50  | 20 " "                |
| Lacquered Ware                                | 71  | 67½   | 30 " "                |
| Mats  | 71  | 62½   | 30 " "                |
| Raw Silk                                      | 68½   | 50  | 20 " "                |
|   | £2-13-4. on value<br>+ 4s. per lb.                | 4s. per lb.                                       | 1d. per lb.           |
| Silk manufactures                             | Prohibited  | Prohibited  | 20 per cent on value. |
| Taffeties or other plain or<br>figured Silks. | Prohibited  | Prohibited  | 30 " " "              |
| Manufactures of Silk                          | Prohibited  | Prohibited  | 20 " " "              |
| Sugar, (cost price about £1<br>per cwt)       | £1-13-0 per cwt.                                  | £3-3-0 per cwt.                                   | £1-12-0 per cwt.      |
| Spirits (Arruck)                              | £0-1-8 per gallon<br>+ £0-19-1½ Ex-<br>cise Duty. | £0-2-1 per gallon<br>+ £0-17-0½ Ex-<br>cise Duty. | £0-15-0 per gallon.   |
| Cotton Wool                                   | £0-16-11 per 100<br>lbs.                          | 6 per cent.                                       | 20 per cent.          |

*Note.* To what extent the unjust commercial policy of England discouraged and ruined the manufactures of India will appear from the following tables.

## Exports shipped from Calcutta to United Kingdom only.

| Year | Cotton<br>Bales | Cotton<br>Piece goods<br>Bales | Silk<br>Bales | Silk<br>Piece goods<br>Bales | Lac &<br>Lac dye<br>Maunds | Indigo<br>Chests |
|------|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| 1800 | 506             | 2,636                          | 213           | Figures not<br>given         | Figures<br>not given       | 12,811           |
| 1801 | 222             | 6,341                          | 238           | "                            | "                          | 9,928            |
| 1802 | 2,072           | 14,817                         | 400           | "                            | "                          | 8,694            |
| 1803 | 2,420           | 13,649                         | 1,232         | "                            | "                          | 12,986           |
| 1804 | 602             | 9,631                          | 1,926         | "                            | "                          | 18,339           |
| 1805 | 2,453           | 2,325                          | 1,327         | "                            | "                          | 13,456           |
| 1806 | 7,315           | 651                            | 1,689         | "                            | "                          | 17,542           |
| 1807 | 3,717           | 1,686                          | 482           | "                            | "                          | 19,452           |
| 1808 | 2,016           | 237                            | 817           | "                            | "                          | 16,622           |
| 1809 | 40,781          | 104                            | 1,124         | "                            | "                          | 8,852            |
| 1810 | 3,477           | 1,167                          | 949           | "                            | "                          | 13,264           |
| 1811 | 160             | 955                            | 2,623         | "                            | "                          | 14,335           |
| 1812 | —               | 1,471                          | 1,889         | "                            | "                          | 13,703           |
| 1813 | 11,705          | 557                            | 638           | "                            | "                          | 23,672           |
| 1814 | 21,587          | 919                            | 1,786         | "                            | "                          | 16,544           |
| 1815 | 17,228          | 3,842                          | 2,196         | "                            | "                          | 26,221           |

| Year | Cotton<br>Bales | Cotton<br>Piece goods<br>Bales | Silk<br>Bales | Silk<br>Piece goods<br>Bales | Lace &<br>Lace dye<br>Maunds | Indigo<br>Chests |
|------|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------|
| 1816 | 85,024          | 2,711                          | 8,884         | Figures not<br>given         | Figures<br>not given         | 15,740           |
| 1817 | 50,176          | 1,904                          | 2,260         | "                            | "                            | 15,583           |
| 1818 | 127,124         | 666                            | 2,066         | "                            | "                            | 13,044           |
| 1819 | 30,683          | 536                            | 6,998         | 468                          | "                            | 16,670           |
| 1820 | 12,939          | 3,186                          | 6,805         | 522                          | "                            | 12,526           |
| 1821 | 5,415           | 2,139                          | 6,977         | 704                          | "                            | 12,635           |
| 1822 | 6,544           | 1,668                          | 7,893         | 950                          | "                            | 19,751           |
| 1823 | 11,713          | 1,534                          | 6,537         | 742                          | 14,190                       | 15,878           |
| 1824 | 12,415          | 1,337                          | 7,069         | 1,105                        | 17,607                       | 22,472           |
| 1825 | 15,800          | 1,878                          | 8,061         | 1,558                        | 13,491                       | 25,837           |
| 1826 | 15,101          | 1,253                          | 6,856         | 1,233                        | 13,573                       | 14,924           |
| 1827 | 4,735           | 541                            | 7,719         | 971                          | 13,756                       | 30,761           |
| 1828 | 4,105           | 736                            | 10,431        | 550                          | 15,379                       | 19,041           |
| 1829 | —               | 433                            | 7,000(?)      | —                            | 8,251                        | 27,000(?)        |

*Note.* These figures will shew that while the export of raw silk held its ground, that of silk piece goods shewed a decline. The export of cotton too was on the decline, but the most marked decrease was in that of cotton piece goods. In the early years of the nineteenth century, in spite of all prohibitions and restrictive duties, six to fifteen thousand bales were annually shipped to the United Kingdom. The figure fell to less than 1000 bales in 25 years.

The preceding figures shew the decline in the exports to the United Kingdom only. A similar decline took place in the export of Indian piece goods to the other countries of the world, notably to America, Denmark, Spain, Portugal, Mauritius, and the markets of Asia. The export to America declined from 13,633 bales in 1801 to 258 bales in 1829; Denmark which took 1,457 bales in 1800 never took more than 150 bales after 1820; Portugal which took 9,714 bales in 1799 never took a thousand bales after 1825; and the exports to the Arabian and Persian Gulfs which rose to between four and seven thousand bales between 1810 and 1820, never exceeded two thousand after 1825.

On the other hand, as India lost her manufacturing industry, she began to import British and other foreign piece goods, paying for it in food grains. The following figures are interesting. <sup>14</sup>

(14) *Ibid.* Appendix 33.

Some British and foreign goods imported through Calcutta into Bengal.

| Year | Broad Cloth Pieces | Cotton Yarn lbs.  | Cotton Twist lbs. | Mule Twist lbs.   | Piece goods Value in £ sterling | Liquors Value in £ Sterling. |
|------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1813 | 3,381              | Figures not given | Figures not given | Figures not given | Figures not given               | 52,253                       |
| 1814 | 4,635              | "                 | "                 | "                 | "                               | 57,201                       |
| 1815 | 3,908              | "                 | "                 | "                 | "                               | 59,462                       |
| 1816 | 3,707              | "                 | "                 | "                 | "                               | 56,411                       |
| 1817 | 2,355              | "                 | "                 | "                 | "                               | 53,157                       |
| 1818 | 5,633              | "                 | "                 | "                 | "                               | 36,712                       |
| 1819 | 9,244              | "                 | "                 | "                 | "                               | 20,988                       |
| 1820 | 5,546              | "                 | "                 | "                 | "                               | 26,949                       |
| 1821 | 7,590              | "                 | "                 | "                 | "                               | 30,382                       |
| 1822 | 5,108              | "                 | "                 | "                 | "                               | 46,235                       |
| 1823 | 7,346              | "                 | "                 | "                 | 64,449                          | 30,129                       |
| 1824 | 5,401              | "                 | "                 | "                 | 43,030                          | 22,439                       |
| 1825 | 13,981             | "                 | "                 | "                 | 158,076                         | 14,223                       |
| 1826 | 9,629              | "                 | "                 | "                 | 178,481                         | 56,058                       |
| 1827 | 5,430              | 82,738            | 432,878           | 333,234           | 296,177                         | 80,595                       |
| 1828 | 7,609              | 149,076           | 642,306           | 464,776           | 235,837                         | 41,142                       |
| 1829 | 11,838             | 98,154            | 398,930           | 918,646           | 197,290                         | 31,311                       |

Some British and Foreign Goods imported through Madras into the Madras Province.

| Year | Chintz | Long Cloth | Muslin | Piece Goods | Satin | Silk Piece Goods | Broad Cloths | Shawls | Wollen Apparel | Wollens |
|------|--------|------------|--------|-------------|-------|------------------|--------------|--------|----------------|---------|
| 1824 | £      | £          | £      | £           | £     | £                | £            | £      | £              | £       |
| 1825 | —      | —          | —      | —           | —     | —                | —            | 181    | —              | —       |
| 1826 | —      | —          | —      | —           | —     | —                | —            | 920    | —              | —       |
| 1827 | —      | —          | 342    | 903         | 312   | —                | 835          | 1,159  | —              | 614     |
| 1828 | 510    | 470        | 941    | 536         | 637   | —                | 2,176        | 754    | 601            | 915     |
| 1829 | 219    | 380        | 789    | 958         | 593   | —                | 915          | 1,115  | 481            | 1,310   |
| 1829 | 352    | 348        | 598    | 474         | 853   | 644              | 1,417        | 409    | 581            | 844     |
| 1830 | 372    | —          | 224    | 1,121       | 577   | 136              | 1,158        | 476    | 365            | 457     |

*Note.* Public men and public writers in England never spoke or wrote of this policy pursued in India. The great Political Economists of the time, headed by Ricardo, had nothing to say on the subject. Later Political Economists, headed by John Stuart Mill, were equally silent on the subject. Down to the present time no popular English writer on India has dealt adequately with the greatest fact of modern Indian history,—the extinction of Indian Industries under British rule.

Englishmen in England were engaged in the Thirties and Forties in carrying on the agitation against the Corn Laws to a successful issue. Sir Robert Peel, who repealed those Laws in 1846, trusted that his name would be remembered by Englishmen who would "recruit their exhausted strength with abundant and untaxed food, the sweeter because no longer leavened with a sense of injustice." But the bread of the Indian artisan and manufacturer is still leavened with a sense of injustice ; and no statesman has yet seriously endeavoured to protect, foster, and revive their old and ruined industries. Lancashire would not permit any such an endeavour if it was made.

Continental economists were able to take a more unbiassed view of the situation, and to speak more openly and freely. In a great work on Political Economy written in Germany in 1844, while the injustice of the Corn Laws was occupying the minds of English Economists, a German Economist pointed out the graver injustice which had been perpetrated in India.

"Had they sanctioned the free importation into England of Indian cotton and silk goods, the English cotton and silk manufactories must of necessity soon come to a stand. India had not only the advantage of cheaper labour and raw material, but also the experience, the skill, and the practice of centuries. The effect of these advantages could not fail to tell under a system of free competition.

"But England was unwilling to found settlements in Asia in order to become subservient to India in manu-

facturing industry. She strove for commercial supremacy, and felt that of two countries, maintaining free trade between one another, that one would be supreme which sold manufactured goods, while that one would be subservient which could only sell agricultural produce. In the Northern American Colonies, England had already acted on these principles in disallowing the manufactures in those colonies of even a single horse shoe nail, and still more, that no horse shoe nails made there should be imported into England. How could it be expected of her that she would give up her own market for manufactures, the basis of her future greatness, to a people so numerous, so thrifty, so experienced and perfect in the old systems of manufacture as the Hindus?

"Accordingly, England prohibited the import of the goods dealt in by her own factories, the Indian cotton and silk fabrics. The prohibition was complete and peremptory. Not so much as a thread of them would England permit to be used. She would have none of these beautiful and cheap fabrics, but preferred to consume her own inferior and more costly stuffs. She was however quite willing to supply the Continental nations with the far finer fabrics of India at lower prices, and willingly yielded to them all the benefit of that cheapness she herself would have none of it.

"Was England a fool in so acting? Most assuredly, according to the theories of Adam Smith and J. B. Say, the Theory of Values. For according to them, England should have bought what she required where

she could buy them cheapest and best ; it was an act of folly to manufacture for herself goods at a greater cost than she could buy them at, elsewhere, and at the same time give away that advantage to the Continent.

"The case is quite the contrary, according to our theory, which we term the Theory of the Powers of Production, and which the English Ministry, without having examined the foundation on which it rests, yet practically adopted when enforcing their maxim of importing produce and exporting fabrics.

"The English Ministers cared not for the acquisition of low priced and perishable articles of manufacture, but for that of a more costly and enduring *Manufacturing Power*" 15

The above extract will shew that while English political economists professed the principles of free trade from the latter end of the eighteenth century, the English nation declined to adopt them till they had crushed the Manufacturing Power of India, and reared their own Manufacturing Power. Then the British Ministry turned free traders, and invited other nations to accept free trade principles. The other nations, including the British Colonies, knew better, and are now rearing their Manufacturing Power by protection. But in India the Manufacturing Power of the people was stamped out by protection against her industries ; and then free trade was forced on her so as to prevent a revival.

(15) *The National System of Political Economy* by Friedrich List. Translated by Sampson S. Lloyd M. P., London 1885, p. 42.

But is it Free Trade which has been imposed on us? Thrice within the present generation has the Indian tariff been altered, not in the interests of Free Trade, but in the interests of Lancashire. The Indian Government used to impose a small import duty on foreign goods imported into India, not as a protective measure, but simply as a needed source of revenue which did not operate as a protection to her industries. To this insignificant duty, Lancashire objected. Lancashire had twenty or more votes in the House of Commons, and was in a position to coerce the Indian Government and the Secretary of State. The Indian Government yielded against the strong protest of their ablest advisers like Whitley Stokes and Rivers Thompson afterwards Lieutenant Governor of Bengal; and the import duties were abolished. A legitimate source of revenue was thus sacrificed some 20 years ago.

But the Indian Government could not do without this source of revenue. Endeavours were made to conciliate the Lancashire voters,—in vain! Appeals were made to their generosity,—in vain! At last a remedy was found which was worse than the evil. An Import duty was reimposed on goods imported into India, but in order to conciliate Lancashire importers, an Excise Duty was also imposed on cotton duties manufactured in India. The ablest officers of the Indian Government, including Charles Stevens afterwards Lieutenant Governor of Bengal protested, but the *mandate* had come from England, that official members must not vote against the policy decided upon by the

Home Government. And thus an Excise Duty on cotton manufactures,—unknown in any other part of the civilised world,—was imposed on Indian manufactures. While every other Government on Earth is helping and encouraging its manufacturers in the great international competition, the Indian Government hampers and obstructs Indian manufacturers by an Excise Duty on Indian fabrics. Is this Free Trade? Is this administration of India for the good of the Indian people?

But, gentlemen, I go further than this. I do not pin my faith to Free Trade, and I do not pin my faith to Protection. I hold that the policy most conducive to the prosperity and happiness of the people of India is the policy which should be adopted for India.

My conclusion is therefore this :

(1) That whatever trade policy conduces to the prosperity of the Indian people is the policy which should be adopted for India.

(2) That it is more advantageous to the general well-being of India to encourage and revive her native industries and manufactures than to obtain articles manufactured in other countries for the consumption of her population.

(3) That seeing that every country in the world takes measures to promote home manufactures and industries by measures needed for the purpose, India would be doubly justified in adopting similar measures to revive her Manufacturing Power crushed by unjust and unfair methods, and to give varied employment to her population who are now almost entirely dependent

on agriculture and therefore subject to frequent and devastating famines.

(4) That it is the duty of every Indian to do all that he can, all through his life, to help in the revival of Indian industries and manufactures, so as to diversify the occupations and add to the resources of the people of India.

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## XI. BOMBAY LAND REVENUE AMENDMENT ACT.

[*Memorial to the Secretary of State for India, presented  
in November 1901.*]

A CONFERENCE of Indians residing in the United Kingdom was held at 84, Palace Chambers, Westminster, on the afternoon of November 23, Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji in the chair, the object being to adopt a Memorial to the Secretary of State for India in regard to the Bombay Land Revenue Amendment Act. Among those present were Messrs. Romesh Dutt, C. I. E., Martin Wood, J. M. Parikh, B. Hellier, O. P. Vaidya, H. L. Ahuja, N. B. Wagle, and K. H. Singh. The following report appeared in *India*.

The CHAIRMAN called upon Mr. Dutt to move the first resolution, remarking that there was no one more competent to treat with the subject under debate than that gentleman.

Mr. DUTT moved:—"That this Conference adopts this Memorial, printed copies of which have been circulated, and requests Messrs. Naoroji, Dutt, and Harnam Singh, to forward the same to the Right Hon. Lord George Hamilton, M. P., Secretary of State for India in Council, for his kind and careful consideration." He said that the Memorial itself fully explained the object for which they were assembled. It began by describing the state of the cultivators of Bombay in the early days

of British rule, as well as under the Mahratta rule which obtained immediately prior to 1817. They were told that during the first four of five years after the Bombay Presidency came under British rule, very able and benevolent officers like the Hon. Mountstuart Elphinstone and Mr. Chaplin went into the land question, and ascertained what was the status of the cultivators under the old Mahratta rule; and extracts were given from their recorded opinions.

The Hon'ble Mountstuart Elphinstone, who became Commissioner of the Deccan in 1818, submitted, in October, 1819, a long report on the territories conquered from the Peshwa, in the course of which he said:—"A large portion of the Ryots are the proprietors of their estates, subject to the payment of a fixed land tax to Government," and that "their property is hereditary and saleable." Two years afterwards the whole question was gone into by the different Collectors in the Bombay Presidency; and Captain Robertson, the Collector of Poona, said in 1821, that the Bombay cultivator was "in no way inferior in point of tenure on its original basis as described in the quotation to the holder of the most undisputed freehold estate in England." Another Collector, Captain Pottinger of Ahmadnagar, wrote in 1822: "The Mirasi tenure has existed in this part of India from time immemorial, and when I have asked about the period of its establishment, I have been told I might as well enquire when the soil was created." Again, Mr. Commissioner Chaplin, in his report of August, 1822, stated that "the Mirasi tenure

general throughout the whole of that part of the conquered territory which extends from the Krishna to the range of Ghats which divides Gungterre from Khandesh,' and "a Ryot having once acquired the hereditary right of occupancy, is together with his heirs entitled to hold it by sale, gift, or mortgage, and, according to the usage of the Deccan, without previously obtaining the permission of the Government."

These extracts from reports written by the ablest officials of the Bombay Presidency proved, that at the time when the Peshwa's dominions came under British rule, the fixed tenants of the Bombay Presidency were possessed of the rights of sale and mortgage and inheritance, and paid a fixed land tax. The Mahratta Government, no doubt, from time to time imposed additional taxes to meet war and other expenses, but the land tax was a fixed tax. During the first years of British rule there were many experimental land settlements, failures more or less, but at last Captain Wingate and other officials, who were employed to make a more satisfactory land settlement, issued their joint Report in 1847. The principles advocated in that Report, and adopted by the Government, were, firstly, that separate settlements should be made with individual cultivators; secondly, that leases for thirty years should be substituted for the short leases which had preceded; and thirdly, that the estimated value of lands should be accepted as the basis of assessment. The heritable and transferable rights of the tenants were recognised, but the principle of a fixed land tax was abandoned in favour of a land

tax to be settled at each recurring settlement. Thus the British Government accepted and continued the rights of inheritance and of sale and mortgage which the Bombay cultivator had previously possessed, but they discontinued the right of paying a fixed land tax.

The Survey Officers fixed a new land tax according to their own judgment, and called upon the cultivator to accept his holding on condition of paying the tax, or in the alternative to give it up. While that settlement was still going on, the East India Company's Charter came under consideration, and in 1853 a Committee of the House of Commons held an enquiry into the Bombay Land Settlement, at which Mr. W. A. Goldfinch, one of the officers who had been working under Captain Wingate, was examined. He was asked the following question by Sir T. H. Maddock :—"After the survey was finished when you found a field—say No. 11—of five bigas of land in the possession of some particular person, did the Collector assess the revenue upon it arbitrarily, or did he ask the occupant or proprietor whether he was willing to pay the amount?" He answered; "The assessment was fixed by the Superintendent of the Survey, *without any reference to the cultivator*, and when those rates were introduced the holder of each field was summoned to the Collector, and informed of the rate at which his land would be assessed in future; and if he chose to retain it on those terms he did; if he did not choose, he threw it up." Thus it was clear that on the question of the land tax the cultivator was placed entirely at the mercy of the

Survey Officer, and was not consulted at all. It was a contract between two parties—the Government and the cultivator—in regard to which one party had no chance of expressing an opinion. Where a man had inherited land from his forefathers, dating back it might be for many generations, and even centuries, the land tax was assessed solely on the judgment of the Survey Officer, and the man's retention of his holding was made to depend on his willingness to pay the new tax; refusal, in fact, involved forfeiture of the land. Thus, the great fault of the system introduced by the British administrators in the forties and fifties was the arbitrary fixing of the land tax without consulting the views and wishes of the cultivators. It was acknowledged that the cultivators had certain rights of sale and mortgage, and that those rights passed with the transfer of the inheritance; the only thing that was not acknowledged was the right to a fixed land tax.

Nine years later—in 1862—Lord Canning caused an exhaustive enquiry to be made into the cause of the famine which had desolated Northern India in 1860. Col. B. Smith conducted it, and he came to the conclusion that, for the benefit of the people of India, it was necessary to fix a permanent limit to the land tax, so that, in future, addition to agricultural income might go to the people themselves and not be made the basis for additional taxation. Lord Canning thereupon consulted the Bombay and Madras Governments. The latter replied that their settlement was virtually permanent, as they did not ask for any increase in the land tax unless

waste lands were brought into cultivation. On the other hand, the Bombay Government said they did not agree as to the propriety of a fixed land tax, as prices of food were going up and there was no reason why the Government should not increase its taxation accordingly. These were the words of the Bombay Governor :—"As the prices of the produce are yearly increasing, I see no infringement of the original conditions of the settlement, nor will such be felt by the Ryot, if on the expiration of this experimental settlement the Government land tax should be re-adjusted according to those increased prices, and to other circumstances." Lord Canning's proposal for a permanent settlement received the support of both Lord Halifax and Sir Stafford Northcote ; and had Lord Canning lived five years after his retirement, no doubt the people of India would have got a permanent settlement. But, unfortunately, he died shortly after his retirement. The question consequently hung fire for about 20 years, and at last, in 1883, the proposal was absolutely rejected.

At that time the Marquis of Ripon was Viceroy of India, and he, made another suggestion, giving some sort of security to the cultivators of India against an unreasonable increase in the revenues. He suggested that in all districts which had once been surveyed and settled, there should not be any increase in the land tax except on the ground of an increase in prices. That proposal, which was rejected by the Bombay Government, was accepted by the Madras Government, and for a year or two was acted upon, but Lord Ripon

having retired from India in 1884, it was vetoed by the India Office in 1885. That brought them back to the old state of things; the cultivators had absolutely no voice in fixing the land tax; there was no appeal from the decision of the Survey Officers—who he was willing to admit were experienced considerate men—and the contract was altogether one-sided.

What had been the result of this state of things which existed up to last year? The land tax had gone on increasing, and it had been estimated that in the survey commenced in 1866, the revenue increased 32 per cent; and so far as the 1896 survey had proceeded there had been a further increase of 30 per cent. These continuous increases necessarily left the cultivators poorer after each settlement. They would all remember the opinion expressed by the late Sir William Hunter that the difficulty of improving the condition of the cultivator of Bombay was attributable to the fact that the land tax was so heavy as not to leave the cultivator sufficient money to support his family and himself for twelve months. And no doubt most of them had read the report in which Sir A. MacDonnell's Commission declared that in Gujrat the land tax was so "full" that its rigorous collection necessarily drove the cultivator into debt, and put him under the thralldom of the money-lender. What was the remedy for this state of things? It was to make an enquiry into the circumstances of the land tax and to reduce it where it was too heavy. That had been urged from time to time, but so far no enquiry had been held. The Government claimed that their desire

was to rescue the cultivator from the thralldom of the money-lender, but they had adopted a wrong remedy.

For they were now taking power in the Act, to which the Memorial took exception, to withdraw from the cultivator his ancient right of holding his fields in perpetuity, as recognised under the old Mahratta rule, and under British rule from 1835 to 1900. The Hon. Mr. Mehta, speaking before the Bombay Council, thus described that ancient right: "The combined operation of Sections 68 and 73 shows that every occupant of land has an heritable and transferable right in it, and if the Survey Settlement is applied to that land, the occupant is entitled to the use and occupation in perpetuity. It is impossible to explain away the final words of Section 73—'the right of occupancy shall be deemed and heritable and transferable property, etc., and shall immediately pass to the person whose agreement to become occupant shall have been accepted by the Collector.' The last words would never have been allowed to form part of the Act unless it was deliberately intended to render impossible annual or short term tenancies of land brought under settlement. My hon. friend (Mr. Monteath) has told us a great deal in his speech about individual existing occupants and their vested rights and interests. But he quietly gives go-by to the fact that leaving individual occupants alone, the effect of Section 73 is to permanently impress the land with occupancy rights, the tenure in perpetuity being the most essential in them. Individuals may hold and individuals may relinquish it, but the land itself can be held

only, whenever held by a tenure, in perpetuity. It is this deliberate character impressed upon the land that this Bill is framed to destroy."

Under the system which existed in Bombay down to 1900, certain rights attached to the land itself. The system was similar to what prevailed in Bengal, where, when an estate was sold, the purchaser acquired it with the right of paying the old land tax. The same principle obtained, too, in England. Under this Bill the Government, however were taking power to confiscate the right which had so long attached to the land in Bombay. What were the words of Mr. Monteath in regard to this proposal? "There are strong reasons for believing that it was not the intention of the Code to deprive the Government of the power to grant land in special cases." Surely, if the Government only proposed to apply this new power to special cases there might be some justification for it. But the special cases were not even indicated in the Act itself, and that was one of its vital defects. It might be necessary, for political reasons, to restrict the right of sale, mortgage, or inheritance, in the case of certain hill tribes. But the Bill enabled the power to be exercised wherever the Bombay Government liked in the whole Presidency. Of course there was no intention to apply it universally, but surely a limit should be placed in the Act itself. Their objections to the Act then were: Firstly, that it confiscated a right which existed under the Mahratta rule and which had been respected under British rule, and for the withdrawal of which there was no

sufficient justification ; and, Secondly, that the Act was too vague, enabling the Government to withdraw the right in any part of the Presidency without giving any details or assigning any reasons. The Memorialists, therefore, asked the Secretary of State to veto the Act, or at any rate to exclude from its operation all lands to which the Survey Settlement had been extended, and in which, therefore, the heritable, transferable, and perpetual right of the cultivator has already been recognised by British legislation ; and the Memorialists believed that the effect of the Bill would be to deepen agricultural distress and create a political danger. (Cheers.)

Mr. GADGIL seconded the resolution. Reasonable men, he said, looked upon this piece of legislation as a defective and retrograde step. It would not achieve the object which the Government professed to have in view ; it would not improve the position of the poor down-trodden agriculturist of the Bombay Presidency ; but pernicious results were bound to follow from it. It was a small piece of legislation, but it had created great consternation throughout the Presidency. He particularly desired to direct their attention to Section 68, which read :—

“Provided that nothing in this or any other Section shall make it, or shall be deemed ever to have made it, unlawful for the Collector at any time to grant permission to any person to occupy any unalienated unoccupied land, for such period, and on such conditions as he may, subject to the orders of the Government, prescribe, and in any such case the occupancy shall, whether a

survey settlement has been extended to the land or not, be held only for the period, and subject to the conditions so prescribed."

Now, until this Act was passed, a tenant, immediately he entered into possession of a piece of land, became entitled to all the rights attaching to it in perpetuity; but the effect of Section 68, read with Section 73, would be to make the cultivator absolutely dependent on the will of the Collector, who would impose his own conditions and make the tenure for any period he pleased—short or long. This was a very large power indeed. What were the reasons advanced by the Government for making this change? It was alleged that they desired to prevent the cultivator being overburdened and falling into the hands of the money-lender, who was said to have brought him into his present distressful condition. But how was it proposed to do it? They took away from the agriculturist the power to transfer or mortgage his piece of land, which he held in perpetuity; the money-lender would consequently refuse to lend him any money because the security was gone; and the man would become absolutely dependent on the Government even for his living. Failure to pay the land tax would lead to forfeiture, and the land would only be re-granted on entirely new conditions. They were told by Mr. Monteath that the occupants on the restricted tenure would have the same right of holding in perpetuity as other occupants, and the guarantee of the survey assessment would be as binding in their case as in any other case. That in itself was a very good

assurance, but what was there to prevent any future officer of the Bombay Government giving full force to the Act irrespective of that assurance? What was desirable was to make the Act thoroughly explicit. He would especially like to draw their attention to the first sentence of Section 68. That gave retrospective effect to the Act. Then again Section 73 gave absolute power to the authorities to deal with the proprietary rights of the cultivators, and he ventured to urge in conclusion that the general effect of the Act would be to detract from the desire of the occupant of the land to improve the soil, because he would never be sure that his descendants would be allowed to benefit by his improvements.

Mr. VAIDYA said that undoubtedly the Bombay holders were hampered by their indebtedness, but it was curious that the Government should take this opportunity of introducing fresh legislation calculated to make their position worse. He did not think the Act would remove the evil at which it was aimed. He looked upon it as a suicidal policy and regretted to say that it was only another illustration of the tendency of the Government, whenever it dealt with the land question, to further restrict the rights of the land owners. If they wanted to deal with the money-lending evil, let them put some limit on the operations of the money-lending classes.

Mr. J. M. PARIKH said the new Act gave the Government complete dominion over the land which they had never before possessed. The indirect effect

of the legislation was to legalise the position of the Government as absolute owner of the land in the Bombay Presidency, and it constituted a deprivation of the rights of the occupants for the time being without any compensation whatever. They were promised that the Act should not be applied at random, but they wanted a clear statement in it of the intentions of the Government, so that in the future the evils which they feared might not be brought about. The past history of the British administration in India did not give them confidence that the promises now made would be fulfilled, and hence the necessity for clearly limiting the operation of the Act. Collectors were bound to fill the coffers of the Treasury as completely as possible, and in the days to come the Act would be construed not according to the utterances of Mr. Montcath but by the canons of statute law.

The resolution was then put and carried unanimously, and the proceedings closed with hearty votes of thanks to Mr. Naoroji and Mr. Dutt, proposed by Mr. Ahuja and seconded by Mr. Patker.

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#### TEXT OF THE MEMORIAL.

To the Right Hon'ble Lord George Hamilton,  
Secretary of State for India.

My Lord,—We, the undersigned, have been empowered at a Conference held on November 23, 1901, to forward to your Lordship in Council this memorial on the subject of the Bombay Land Revenue Code

Amendment Act, known as Bombay Act VI of 1901, which received the assent of His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General of India on the 24th September 1901.

2.—We desire, at the commencement, to submit to your Lordship that the Bombay cultivator's right of inheritance, sale, and mortgage, with regard to his holding, is an ancient right, and is not a creation of British legislation. The dominions of the last Mahratta Peshwa were annexed by the British Government in 1817, and two years after, the Hon'ble Mountstuart Elphinstone wrote thus in his "Report on the Territories conquered from the Peshwa," submitted in October, 1819:—

"A large portion of the Ryots are proprietors of their estate, subject to the payment of a fixed land tax to Government; that their property is hereditary and saleable, and they are never dispossessed while they pay their tax, and even then they have for a long period (at least thirty years) the right of reclaiming their estate, on paying the dues of Government. Their land tax is fixed, but the Mahratta Government loaded it with other impositions."

3.—Captain Robertson, who was Collector of Poona in 1821, bore his testimony to the rights of the Mirasi or hereditary cultivator in the following terms:—

"He is in no way inferior in point of tenure on its original basis, as described in the quotation, to the holder of the most undisputed freehold estate in England." "The ancestors of many of the present occupants of the lands of the Deccan were probably

holders of land antecedent to the Mussalman conquest of the country, on condition of paying a 'reddendum' equal to a sixth part of the produce." "Every original paper relating to Thalkaris [Mirasi tenants] and their occupation of the land, every return I have obtained from the districts concerning them and the ancient distribution of land, proves beyond a shadow of doubt that at a former time the whole of the arable land of each village was apportioned out among a certain number of families." "Their descendants collectively are termed a Jutha; they are inferred to possess the whole of the original estate among them; they are responsible as a body corporate for the payment of whatever is due to Government." Captain Robertson also showed that the Mirasi tenure was heritable and transferable and existed in all villages in Poona district.

4.—Captain Pottinger, the Collector of Ahmadnagar, wrote in 1822 that the Mirasi tenants "can dispose or mortgage their lands when they like." "The Mirasi tenure has existed in this part of India from time immemorial; and when I have asked about the period of its establishment, I have been told I might as well enquire when the soil was made."

5.—These and other reports were enclosed by Mr. Commissioner Chaplin in his exhaustive and famous report of the 20th August, 1822. And with regard to the Mirasi tenure he recorded that it "is very general throughout the whole of that part of the conquered territory which extends from the Krishna to the range of Ghats which divides Gungterre from Khandesh."

"A Ryot having once acquired the hereditary right of occupancy is, together with his heirs, entitled to hold it by sale, gift, or mortgage, and according to the usage of the Deccan, without previously obtaining the permission of the Government." A Mirasdar "has a voice in all the village councils, has a right of pasture on the village commons, can build a house or dispose of it by sale." "The Collector [of Poona] is very properly an advocate for preserving the rights of Mirasdars, a line of policy which he strenuously recommends in several places; but as nobody, I trust, has ever thought of invading their rights, the discussion of the question at any length would be superfluous."

6.—We have made these extracts from the reports of the first five years after the Mahratta dominions came under the British rule, in order to show the position of the majority of the cultivators under the old Mahratta rule. It is too often assumed that the cultivators had no heritable and transferable rights under the old regime; that their heritable and transferable rights were the creation of British legislation. The extracts we have made will show that the very opposite of this is the truth. Laws were not passed by Legislative Councils, nor recorded in published Acts under the Hindu rule, but were embodied in the customs and usages of the land, which were more durable and less variable than the Acts and Laws of modern times. And the testimony of Elphinstone, Robertson, Pottinger, and Chaplin, quoted above, will show that the usages and customs of the land recognised the right of inheritance and transfer in the

Bombay cultivator, and also respected his right to hold his land on payment of a fixed land tax.

7.—The Government of Bombay, after many experimental land settlements, at last based their policy on the famous Joint Report of 1847. The principles advocated in this report, and adopted by the Government, were, firstly, that separate settlements should be made with individual cultivators; secondly, that leases for thirty years should be substituted for the short leases which had preceded; thirdly, that the estimated value of lands should be accepted as the basis of assessment. The heritable and transferable rights of the tenants were recognised, but the principle of a fixed land tax was abandoned in favour of a land tax to be settled at each recurring settlement.

8.—From that date, the heritable and transferable rights of the Bombay cultivators have been uniformly recognised up to the present year. In the Bombay Land Revenue Code of 1879 (Bombay Act V of 1879), Section 68, runs thus:—

“An occupant is entitled to the use and occupation of his land for the period, if any, to which his occupancy is limited, or if the period is unlimited, or a survey settlement has been extended to the land, in perpetuity conditionally on the payment of the amounts due on account of the land revenue for the same, according to the provisions of this Act, or of any rules made under this Act, or of any other law for the time in force, or on the fulfilment of any other terms lawfully annexed to his occupancy.”

And Section 73 runs thus :—

"The right of occupancy shall be deemed an heritable and transferable property, subject to the provisions contained in Section 56, or otherwise prescribed by the Law, and shall immediately pass to the person whose agreement to become occupant shall have been accepted by the Collector."

9.—Thus stood the law in 1879. The law of 1901 empowers the Bombay Government to extinguish at its pleasure these ancient and customary rights of the cultivators, hitherto recognised by British legislation.

In Section 68, the following Proviso has been added, by the new Act :—

"Provided that nothing in this or any other Section shall make it, or shall be deemed ever to have made it, unlawful for the Collector at any time to grant permission to any person to occupy any unalienated unoccupied land, for such period, and on such conditions as he may, subject to the orders of Government, prescribe, and in such case the occupancy shall, *whether a survey settlement has been extended to the land or not*, be held only for the period and subject to the conditions so prescribed."

And after section 73, the following new Section has been added by the new Act :—

"(1) Notwithstanding anything in the foregoing Section, in any tract or village to which Government may, by Notification published before the introduction therein of an original survey settlement under Section 103, declare the provisions of this Section applicable, the

*occupancy or interest of the occupant in the land shall not after the date of such Notification be transferable without the previous sanction of the Collector.*

“(2) Government may, by Notification in the Bombay Gazette, from time to time exempt any part of such tract or village, or any person or class of persons, from the operation of this Section.”

10.—The italics in the foregoing two paragraphs are our own, and indicate the principal changes introduced by the new Act. The new Act empowers the Government

(1) to abolish the tenant's right “in perpetuity” in tenures to which the survey settlement had been extended, and empowers it to make temporary settlements ;

(2) to restrict the right of transfer hitherto recognised in all tenants of lands to which the survey settlement had been extended.

11.—We do not believe that it is the intention of the Indian Government to confiscate tenant rights which are based on the ancient customs of India, and which have been recognised by British rulers and by British legislation for more than two generations. It is intended, as we learn from the assurances of the Bombay Government, to exercise the power taken by the Government only in exceptional cases. The fatal defect of the Act just passed is that it does not indicate these exceptional cases. It empowers the Bombay Government to withdraw old and legalised rights by a simple Notification, i.e., by a simple exercise of the executive power of the Government. It invests the Bombay Government

with a more unlimited power in this respect than is possessed or claimed by the Government of any Province in India. Laws are made to indicate, as nearly as possible, the powers which they vest in the Executive, and the rights which they assure to the people; and the Land Revenue Codes of other Provinces of India and the Rent Laws of Bengal have been framed on this plan. Laws which vest in the Executive unlimited powers to extinguish or to preserve tenant rights fail in their primary object, and have hitherto been unknown in India.

12.—It is remembered in Bombay that the rights of holding land “in perpetuity” and of sale and transfer were legally conferred by the British Government on tenants as substitutes for the same rights which they enjoyed previous to the British rule, and which were observed and recorded by Elphinstone and Chaplin. It is politically unwise now to withdraw the legal assurance to these ancient rights, and to make them dependent on the will of the Executive. It is politically unwise to empower the Executive to preserve or to extinguish those tenant rights which have been customary in Western India for centuries, and which have hitherto been legally recognised by the British Government.

13.—No laws made by British rulers in India affect the interests and the lives of the great mass of the Indian population more intimately than the laws relating to tenant rights. The laws attaching certain rights to survey tenures in Bombay have been keenly appreciated by millions of cultivators in that Province, and these

rights have been recognised since the dawn of British rule. The new Act making these rights dependent in the future on the will of the Executive has created alarm and consternation. There has been a strong, unanimous, and vehement opposition against the new Act on the part of the Indian public such has never before been witnessed in Bombay. To keep the Act on the Statute Book will create a feeling of unrest among the agricultural population of Bombay.

14.—We therefore pray that your Lordship, in Council, will, after due consideration, veto the Act which has lately received the sanction of the Indian Government. In any case we trust and hope that your Lordship will exclude from the operation of the Act all lands to which the survey settlement has been extended, and in which, therefore, the heritable, transferable, and perpetual right of the cultivator has already been recognised by British legislation.

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The Memorial was signed by Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, Mr. Romesh Dutt, and Mr. K. Harnam Singh, on behalf of the Conference.

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## XII. ENQUIRY INTO THE ECONOMIC CONDITION OF INDIA.

*[Memorial submitted to the Secretary of State for India  
in January 1902. It was prepared by the Indian  
Famine Union, and is included in this volume as  
Mr. Dutt was one of the signatories]*

MY LORD,

We, the undersigned, being interested in the welfare of India, and grieved on account of the sufferings of the Indian people from recurring famines, desire to approach you with reference to an investigation of the causes of these famines and the promotion of all practical means of prevention.

We recognise the energy and success with which the Government of India have through several visitations of famine performed their stupendous task of feeding millions of starving sufferers scattered over vast areas, and we believe that the various Famine Commissions, by careful scrutiny of past results, are gradually bringing our system of famine relief to the highest point of efficiency. The methods of famine relief do not therefore appear to us to press for enquiry. But there remains the question of famine prevention. Here all possible help is needed to collect facts and mature practical suggestions. And we believe that such as we can offer will be welcomed by the hard-worked officials in India, whose time is fully occupied by the current duties of administration.

Many means have been suggested for strengthening the position of the Indian agriculturist and rendering him more capable of resisting the effects of drought, such as the more rapid extension of irrigation, agricultural banks, village and other industries, re-afforestation, migration, grain storage, export duties on grain, technical education, arbitration courts, besides administrative reforms, such as timely remissions of land revenue during periods of famine, and the limitation of land alienation. These various remedies appear to us to deserve careful enquiry, and we doubt not that, as each comes under investigation, your Lordship will favour us with information from the India Office showing what has been done by the Government in the directions indicated up to the present time. But we are most strongly impressed with the conviction that the problem of checking famine in India cannot be usefully considered without further special knowledge of the different circumstances of its extended territories and of their inhabitants. What is beneficial in one area may be useless and even mischievous elsewhere. An exact diagnosis of the patient must precede the application of remedies. Our request therefore is that the Government will be pleased to cause a detailed enquiry to be made into the economic condition of a limited number of selected villages in each of the provinces which have been afflicted by famine. It is suggested that in each province the local administration should select typical villages, and appoint suitable persons, including officials and non-officials, Europeans and Indians, to make a

complete enquiry into their condition, ascertaining the exact financial position of each cultivator, with the history and causes of his difficulties. When the economic record of these villages is complete, approved experiments in their management might be entrusted to administrators of proved capacity and discretion. Different groups of villages will doubtless be found to require different treatment; and the remedies, administrative and legislative, found efficacious in the typical villages, could be afterwards cautiously extended to the groups existing under similar economic conditions.

We ask with the more confidence for the detailed local enquiries above indicated because we find that precedents exist in which the Government of India have based remedial agrarian legislation upon the results of such enquiries. As important instances we would refer to the labours of the Dekkhan Riots Commission, which led to the Dekkhan Riots Relief Act of 1879; and to the Punjab Alienation of Land Act, 1900, which was based upon a village-by-village and holding-by-holding enquiry carried out in 1895-6 by Mr Thorburn in typical tracts in the Western Punjab. This enquiry, which was both minute and comprehensive, extending to 742 villages, was completed within six months, and involved an extra expense of only £300.

We are, of course, aware that valuable information regarding the economic condition of the agriculturists has been collected by the Government from time to time, especially by means of the enquiries initiated in 1881 and in 1887, and we hope for much enlightenment

from a study of the information thus made accessible. But we desire to point out that, although this information is most valuable for purposes of comparison, it is based on enquiries having no direct connection with famine questions; it belongs to a period before the great famines of 1897 and 1900 had seriously affected the condition of so large a portion of the agricultural population; and it was not generally based, as we believe, on such local enquiries as we suggest. It appears to us, therefore, that fresh enquiries of the kind asked for are urgently necessary, in order to determine the economic condition of the cultivators with reference to their present power of resisting the attacks of famine.

In conclusion, we desire to state that this movement is of a purely scientific character, that it is unconnected with party politics, and that our wish is to support the Indian Government in its efforts to deal with a great national calamity.

For the *Indian Famine Union*,

LEONARD H. COURTNEY, *Chairman*.

W. WEDDERBURN

S. S. THORBURN

M. M. BHOWNAGGREE

} *Joint Hon.*  
} *Secretaries.*

The Hon. Secretaries have been authorised to add the following names to this Memorial:

The Archbishop of Canterbury.

The Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster

The Archbishop of Armagh.

The Marquis of Ripon.

The Earl of Aberdeen.

The Earl of Dunmore.

The Lord Hobhouse.

The Lord Kinnaird.

|                               |                                 |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| The Bishop of Carlisle.       | The Principal of Jesus College, |
| The Bishop of Liverpool.      | Oxford.                         |
| The Lord Leigh.               | The Warden of Keble Col-        |
| The Lord Radstock.            | lege, Oxford.                   |
| The Lord Stanley of Alderley. | The Principal of Manchester     |
| Sir Auckland Colvin, K.C.S.I. | College, Oxford.                |
| Right Hon. Sir Richard        | The Master of Pembroke Col-     |
| Guth, K. C.                   | lege, Oxford.                   |
| Sir Lepel Griffin, K.C.S.I.   | The Principal of Somerville     |
| Sir John Jardine, K.C.I.E.    | College, Oxford.                |
| Sir William Markby, K.C.I.E.  | The Master of Catherine Col-    |
| Sir William Muir, K.C.S.I.    | lege, Cambridge.                |
| General Sir Henry Norman,     | The Master of Clare College,    |
| G. C. B.                      | Cambridge.                      |
| Sir W. Comer Petheram.        | The President of Queen's        |
| Sir John Budd Phear, K.C.I.E. | College, Cambridge.             |
| General Sir J. W. Snider.     | The Principal of Aberdeen       |
| Sir Raymond West, K.C.I.E.    | University.                     |
| Mr. G. B. Chapman.            | The President of Queen's,       |
| Mr. T. Hart Davies.           | College, Belfast.               |
| Mr. T. A. Denny.              | Rev. Canon Ainger.              |
| Mr. E. C. Ozanne.             | Rev. R. A. Armstrong.           |
| Dr. A. D. Pollen.             | Rev. W. T. A. Barber.           |
| Mr. J. R. Reid, C.I.E.        | Rev. Canon Barnett.             |
| Mr. H. J. Reynolds, C.S.I.    | Mr. Bramwell Booth.             |
| Mr. Alex. Rogers.             | Rev. Dr. John Clifford.         |
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| Mr. T. Bayley, M.P.           | Rev. J. Page Hopps.             |
| Mr. J. Brigg, M. P.           | Rev. A. O. M. Jay.              |
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| Mr. J. H. Yoxall, M.P.        | Rev. J. E. Radcliffe.           |
| The Dean of Durham.           | Rev. Dr. Rigg.                  |
| The Dean of Lincoln.          | Rev. T. G. Selby.               |
| The Dean of Llandaff.         | Archdeacon Sinclair.            |
| The Dean of Manchester.       | Rev. T. Spurgeon.               |

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| Rev. Principal Whitehouse.   | The Countess of Carlisle.                       |
| Ven. Archdeacon Wilson.      | Miss Alison Garland.                            |
| Sir Arthur Arnold.           | Madame Sarah Grand.                             |
| Sir Thomas Barlow, M. D.     | Mrs. Eva M'Laren.                               |
| Dr. Karl Blind.              | Mrs. Chas. Mallet.                              |
| Mr. P. W. Bunting.           | Mrs. F. Max Müller.                             |
| Mr. Wilfrid Scawen Blunt.    | Mrs. Russell Rea.                               |
| General Sir William Butler.  | Mrs. Flora Annie Steel.                         |
| Mr. W. P. Byles.             | The Countess of Warwick.                        |
| Mr. Jas. Carter.             | The Lord Mayor of Bristol.                      |
| Mr. Donald Crawford.         | The Lord Mayor of York.                         |
| Mr. Wm. Digby, C.I.E.        | The Mayor of Barnsley.                          |
| Mr. J. Passmore Edwards.     | The Mayor of Barrow-in-Fur-<br>ness.            |
| Mr. A. E. Fletcher.          | The Mayor of Birkenhead.                        |
| Sir Douglas Fox.             | " " Blackburn.                                  |
| Rt. Hon. Sir Edward Fry.     | " " Bootle.                                     |
| Sir Theodore Fry.            | " " Bradford.                                   |
| Professor Wm. Graham.        | " " Cheltenham.                                 |
| Mr. Frederic Harrison.       | " " Coventry.                                   |
| Mr. T. E. Higham.            | " " Gateshead.                                  |
| Mr. C. H. Hopwood, K. C.     | " " Grimsby.                                    |
| Mr. J. Seymour Keay.         | " " Huddersfield.                               |
| Mr. Bertram Keightley.       | " " Ipswich.                                    |
| Mr. C. S. Loch.              | " " Maidstone.                                  |
| Right Hon. Sir Massey Lopes. | " " Newport (Mon.).                             |
| Mr. Fred. Maddison.          | " " Nottingham.                                 |
| Professor Alfred Marshall.   | " " Shoreditch.                                 |
| Mr. George Meredith.         | " " Stepney.                                    |
| Mr. H. S. Murray.            | " " Sunderland.                                 |
| Professor S. J. Owen.        | " " Warrington.                                 |
| Mr. H. D. Pearsall.          | " " Wigan.                                      |
| Sir H. Gilzean Reid.         | The Provost of Ayr.                             |
| Mr. G. Bernard Shaw.         | " " Melrose.                                    |
| Mr. J. Bamford Slack.        | " " Montrose.                                   |
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| Mr. Herbert Spencer.         | The Chairman, Blackburn<br>Chamber of Commerce. |
| Sir W. P. Treloar.           | The Chairman, Cardiff Cham-<br>ber of Commerce. |
| Sir E. H. Verney.            |   |
| Mr. Alfred Wallace.          |   |
| Professor John Westlake.     |   |
| Mr. A. J. Wilson.            |   |

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| The Lord Aberdare.            | Mr. H. J. Reckitt, M.P.         |
| The Lord Keane.               | Mr. S. Forde Rudley, M.P.       |
| The Marquis of Winchester.    | Mr. Edmund Robertson, K.C.      |
| The Lord Wrottesley.          | M.P.                            |
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| Mr. J. Knox Wight.            | The Dean of Gloucester.         |
| Mr. Edward Bond, M.P.         | Rev. Dr. G. S. Burrett.         |
| Mr. R. Cameron, M.P.          | Rev. Canon McColl.              |
| Mr. Alfred Emmott, M.P.       | Rev. Wm. Dale.                  |
| Mr. Samuel Evans, K.C., M.P.  | Rev. Hugh Price Hughes.         |
| Sir Michael Foster, M.P.      | Rev. Vernon Staley.             |
| Sir Walter Foster, M.P.       | Rev. Chas. Voysey.              |
| Mr. J. P. Farrell, M.P.       | Comptoir National D'Escompte    |
| Mr. M. J. Flavin, M.P.        | (Mr. E. Lazarus, Manager).      |
| Sir W. Brampton Gardon, M.P.  | Councillor Fielding Johnson.    |
| Mr. J. Keir Hardie, M.P.      | Sir Wm. Bruce.                  |
| Mr. A. H. Heath, M.P.         | Sir Alfred Newton.              |
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| Mr. P. J. Kennedy, M.P.       | Mr. Edgar Speyer (Messrs.       |
| Sir James Kitson, M.P.        | Speyer Bros.)                   |
| Colonel Hon. Heneage Legge,   | Dr. R. Spence Watson.           |
| M.P.                          | Mr. Alex. Wedderburn, K.C.      |
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| Mr. Chas. McArthur, M.P.      | Mr. W. Martin Wood.             |
| Dr. T. J. Macnamara, M.P.     | Mrs. H. Bradlaugh Bonner.       |
| Mr. J. Lloyd Morgan, M.P.     | Chairman, Cambridgeshire        |
| Mr. Chas. Motley, M.P.        | County Council.                 |
| Mr. T. W. Nussey, M.P.        | Chairman, Merionethshire        |
| Mr. J. J. O'Shee, M.P.        | County Council.                 |
| Mr. A. C. Humphreys Owen,     | The Mayor of Gloucester.        |
| M.P.                          | The Chairman, Bradford          |
| Mr. D. V. Pirie, M.P.         | Chamber of Commerce.            |

### XIII. SPEECH AT MADRAS.

[*Delivered in the rooms of the Mahajana Sabha,  
on February 4, 1902*]

Gentlemen,—I received your telegram a few days ago at Colombo, kindly inviting me and my gifted fellow-passenger, sister Nivedita to speak at a Public Meeting on our arrival at Madras. I felt an unspeakable joy that you should have thus accorded your hearty greetings to a lady who is now one of us, who lives our life, shares our joys and sorrows, partakes our trials and troubles, and labours with us in the cause of our motherland. I also felt gratitude at the honour you had done me personally by giving me this welcome after my prolonged absence. At the same time, I will not conceal from you that your request filled me with grave misgivings. After a somewhat severe course of work in England, I had looked forward to rest and cessation from labours on my return to India, and to a quiet life among those who are nearest and dearest to me. Nothing was farther from my mind than the idea of appearing before the public during my stay in India; and you will believe me when I tell you, that I opened your telegram at Colombo with some degree of terror. Nevertheless, your invitation was so kind that it was difficult to decline; and when you added the worthy name of sister Nivedita to mine in

your telegram, you skilfully closed the gates behind me, and made a retreat on my part impossible. At the same time you also lightened my task ; for in appearing before you on the platform to-day, I feel that I am like the door-keeper of the Sanskrit Drama, who comes on the stage, opens the palace door, introduces the princess, and then retires. I will take care, therefore, not to detain you long ; for I am sure you will all be as anxious as I am to listen to her who follows me. She appears before you not as the partisan of any particular sect or creed, but as belonging to all India, cherishing a noble pride in India's past, labouring with a loving heart for India's future. Therefore, you will recognise in her, as I recognise in her, a beloved countrywoman devoted to the cause of India, and you will listen to her, as I shall listen to her, as to a sister working for all of us in this her adopted country.

#### NO SIGN OF PROGRESS.

Gentlemen, I cannot adequately express to you my feelings on an occasion like this, when we meet after an absence of years. We have been divided by seas and oceans, but have not been divided in our aims and endeavours. The same cause has enlisted our sympathies, and the same objects have inspired our efforts. Therefore, although I have been absent from you for five years,—except during the winter months of 1899-1900,—my thoughts have been your thoughts, my endeavours have been your endeavours, and my aspirations have been your aspirations, all this time.

India has seen little change during these five years. A century has ended and a new century has begun, but we have seen no sign of progress,—rather the reverse. There is no sadder chapter in the economic history of India than the story of these five years, commencing with the famine of 1897, and proceeding on to the famine which has not yet ended. Never in India's history were the mass of the people more resourceless, more crippled as manufacturers, more indebted as agriculturists. Never were greater misfortunes and deaths crowded together within so brief a space. Never did a civilised, fertile, and industrious country present a scene of more widespread poverty and desolation.

But, gentlemen, when we have narrated the story of famines and pestilence, we have not told the whole story of our misfortunes during these five years. Unfortunately, the administration of these years has not made for progress. It is unnecessary for me on an occasion like this to recall to your minds those repressive acts of Government which have engaged your attention so long, and which are still fresh in your memories. I doubt very much if there is any thoughtful and responsible man in India who can look back on these repressive measures to-day with gratification and pride. A feeling of sadness and of despair comes over us as we think of these measures. But, gentlemen, we should never yield to such despair. I for one, have never believed, and will never believe, in this dark future for India. The British Government, in spite of its occasional

lapses into repressive and retrograde measures, cannot permanently accept a policy which is so fatal to the good of the people and so fatal to the Empire.

#### SELF-GOVERNMENT.

More than this, the future of India depends on us, and on us alone. I am old enough to be able to look back thirty or forty years, when a few solitary voices in a few remote places, disconnected with each other, asked for some feeble concessions for the people. I have lived to see the whole of the educated people of India united by one common aim, striving for one common object, demanding that priceless boon of Self-Government which no civilised Government can for ever deny to a civilised nation. I have heard the same note sounded in Madras and in Bombay, in Calcutta and in Lucknow ; I have seen the best, the foremost, the most moderate and thoughtful men in India banded together to obtain for their countrymen a real share in the administration of their own concerns. You cannot travel in any part or province of India, you cannot visit any town or village in India, where the engrossing idea of the most influential and best educated men is not the idea of progress and Self-Government. And this idea which pervades tens of thousands to-day is spreading to hundreds of thousands and to millions. Do you think this fact has no significance ? Do you think that the spread of this feeling, this idea, this ambition, among the entire body of our educated men,—which has taken place within our own memory,—means nothing ? Why, gentlemen, I see in this one

fact the strongest promise for the future, the strongest guarantee for administrative reform and political advancement. It is this slow, silent, steady, irresistible advance which makes nations,—not particular Acts of legislation or measures of administration. The most liberal Acts would be useless and valueless and even hurtful if we had no strength, no faith, no capacity of progress. The most retrograde Acts will fail to impede us, if we have trust and faith in ourselves, if we are true to our country and our cause.

#### EXHORTATION TO HIS COUNTRYMEN.

Therefore, my friends, and countrymen, my first and last word to you is this : Let us have faith in ourselves ! Our future depends on us ; our fate is in our own hands ; our destiny rests on our labours ! Do not, for one moment, despond, for despondency in such a cause is a sin. Do not be intemperate and violent, for hysteric spasms are the signs of weakness, not of strength. Strong in our determination, calm in our conviction, let us speak temperately, clearly, and unmistakably ; and let us work steadily and silently, swerving neither to the right nor to the left from the path of our duty to our country.

Gentlemen, we have candid friends who are always telling us that our agitation is useless and futile ; that our activity does more harm than good ; that our endeavours had better be abandoned. But the path which they thus point out to us is not the path of progress, but the path of death ! The remedy which

these physicians prescribe is that the patient, in order to be cured, should commit suicide ! If you ever study the Economic History of India during the last 150 years, you will clearly comprehend how much we have lost in every way by our inactivity in the past. And if you have watched carefully the course of recent events, you will understand how much of our economic disasters at the present time is due to the exclusion of the people from all share in the management of their own concerns.

#### GOVERNMENT BY CO-OPERATION.

There never has been, and there never can be, any good Government in any great and civilised country without the help and the co-operation of the people themselves. And to advise us to refrain from all endeavours to secure self Government for India, is to perpetuate that economic distress and suffering and misery which unhappily distinguishes India at the present day among all great and civilised country in the earth. No gentlemen, our duty demands it, the good of our country requires it, and the prosperity of British Rule depends on it, that we should have some real share in the administration of our own concerns.

#### OUR DESTINY IS IN OUR HANDS.

For, myself, I would rather that we should endeavour and fail, than not endeavour at all. It is national life to pursue great and worthy objects ; it is national death to stand still and stagnate. But with us, at the present moment, it is not a question of failure ; it is a question

of certain triumph in the end. We may be beaten back, once and again ; we may labour a whole life-time without attaining our end ; but, rest assured, the endeavour will not be made in vain. Our sons will press forward when we sink in the struggle ; the cause of our country will prosper when our ashes are cold ; and before half a century is over, before a quarter of this new century is over, the people of India will have secured a real and valuable share in the administration of their own affairs,—like all the great and civilised nations of the earth. Let us have faith in ourselves, let us be true to ourselves, and our political future is assured, our destiny is in our own hands.

#### THE LAND ASSESSMENT RESOLUTION.

Gentlemen, I thank you again for the welcome you have accorded to us on our arrival in India. In the few words I have addressed to you I have purposely refrained from alluding to the important Resolution which the Government of India have recorded on the subject of the Indian land revenue. I feel greatly honoured by the reference which has been made to my humble work in this very important Resolution ; and the courtesy with which His Excellency's Government has dealt with my suggestions almost disarms criticism. The paper was placed in my hands only this morning, and I have not read even a tenth part of the Resolution yet, and you will pardon me therefore if I am wholly unable on the present occasion to express any opinion on this most important subject. I shall conclude by reiterating my

thanks to the Government of India for the earnest attention which they have bestowed on this subject which is all important in reference to the economic condition of the people of India.

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#### XIV. FIRST REPLY TO LORD CURZON'S LAND RESOLUTION.

*[Appeared in the "Pioneer" March 12, 1902.]*

SIR—A SERIES of Letters on the land tax in the different provinces of India were addressed by the present writer to Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, in the course of 1900, and were subsequently published under the title of "Open Letters to Lord Curzon on Famines and Land Assessments in India." The views expressed in my Letters were also the views of many distinguished Englishmen who had retired after long and meritorious work in India; and a joint Memorial was submitted towards the close of 1900 to the Secretary of State for India. Among the signatories were the Right Hon'ble Sir Richard Garth, late Chief Justice of Bengal, Sir John Jardine, late Judge of the High Court of Bombay, Mr. R. K. Puckle, C. S. I., late Director of Revenue Settlement in Madras, Mr. H. J. Reynolds, C. S. I., late Revenue Secretary of Bengal, Mr. A. Rogers, late Member of Council in Bombay, and Mr. J. H. Garstin, late Member of Council in Madras. I betray no confidence in informing you that the draft of the Memorial was made by the most experienced revenue officer among us, Mr. Puckle, and that his draft was adopted with some slight modifications after several conferences.

The Secretary of State forwarded this Memorial to

the Government of India for consideration, and Lord Curzon's very able Resolution on the subject has just appeared.

Lord Curzon has approached the subject with a statesmanlike conviction of its vast and national importance. He has obtained reports from the Local Governments of the different Provinces; he has recognised the question as transcending the sphere of party or sectional controversy; and he has dealt with his critics with that courtesy which is a part of him. A few extracts from the opening paragraphs of the Resolution will indicate the spirit in which the Viceroy has approached the subject :—

“The Government of India welcomed the opportunity thus afforded to them of instituting renewed enquiries into a matter that has, for more than a century, been the subject of anxious discussion. The well-being of the agricultural community in India, constituting as it does so overwhelming a proportion of the entire population of the Indian Continent, and contributing so large a quota to the Indian revenues, cannot fail to be to the Government a matter of the most intimate concern; nor can it be denied that upon the incidence of the land revenue collections must the prosperity of those classes in a great measure depend. The question may be recognised, therefore, as one of the highest national importance, transcending the sphere of party or sectional controversy, and demanding at once the most exhaustive scrutiny and the most liberal treatment. . . . If prevention of the inevitable consequences of

drought be an ideal incapable of attainment, mitigation is manifestly an object worthy of the closest attention of the Government. It cannot but be their desire that assessments should be equitable in character and moderate in incidence, and there should be left to the proprietor or to the cultivator of the soil—as the case may be—that margin of profit that will enable him to save in ordinary seasons, and to meet the strain of exceptional misfortune.”

In these passages, the Government of India have fully recognised the cardinal principle which I have urged so often in recent years that, in an agricultural country like India, the prosperity and well being of the nation greatly depend on the incidence of the land revenue being moderate and equitable; and that land assessments should be so made as to leave to the proprietor or the cultivator of the soil a margin of profit which will enable him to save in ordinary years to meet the strain of exceptional bad harvests. I could not wish for a more emphatic confirmation of the opinions which I have so frequently advanced; and I gratefully acknowledge that there is no difference, in principle, between the views I have urged and the views so authoritatively laid down in this Government Resolution. And if I still press for land reforms in India, it is because the prevailing practice in India is *not* in conformity with this principle; the incidence of land revenue is *not* moderate and equitable; and a sufficient margin is *not* left to landlords and cultivators to meet the strain of occasional bad harvests.

*The Permanent Settlement.*—The question of permanent settlements does not arise in this discussion. Believing as I do, that a permanent settlement of the land revenues would be in the highest degree beneficial to the people, and would add to their wealth, prosperity, and staying power, I nevertheless refrained from urging such a settlement in my Open Letters, because the India Office had rejected the proposal so late as 1883. And the retired officers who submitted their Memorial to the Secretary of State did not ask for a permanent settlement. We asked for such concessions as were probable, and were consistent with the present land policy of the India Office and the Indian Government. Nevertheless, Lord Curzon has, in his Resolution, dwelt at considerable length on the question of permanent settlements, and the following extracts from his Resolution will explain His Excellency's views:—

"The Government of India indeed know of no ground whatever for the contention that Bengal has been saved from famine by the permanent settlement, a contention which appears to them to be disproved by history, and they are not, therefore, disposed to attach much value to predictions as to the benefits that might have ensued had a similar settlement been extended elsewhere.

"As regards the condition of cultivators in Bengal, who are the tenants of the land owners instituted as a class in the last century by the British Government, there is still less ground for the contention that their position, owing to the permanent settlements, has been converted into one of exceptional comfort and prosperity. It is

precisely because this was not the case, and because, so far from being generously treated by the zemindars, the Bengal cultivator was rack-rented, impoverished, and oppressed, that the Government of India felt compelled to intervene on his behalf, and by the series of legislative measures that commenced with the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1859 and culminated in the Act of 1885, to place him in the position of greater security which he now enjoys. To confound this legislation with the permanent settlement, and to ascribe even in part to the latter the benefits which it had conspicuously failed to confer, and which would never have accrued but for the former, is strangely to misread history."

In other words, Lord Curzon holds *firstly*, that the permanent settlement of Bengal has not prevented the worst effects of famines; and *secondly*, that the prosperous condition of the Bengal cultivator is due, not to the permanent settlement, but to the land legislation of 1859 and 1885. An examination of the facts of the case does not support His Excellency's views.

Bengal in 1770 was visited by the worst famine that has ever afflicted India, and one-third of the population of that rich and fertile province, estimated at ten millions or more, was swept away within twelve months. Bengal was permanently settled in 1793; and since that date famines have been rare in Bengal, and *there has been no famine within the permanently settled tracts causing any loss of life*. The agricultural people are generally prosperous and resourceful; and with some help from the Government they have tided over the worst calamities without

the most lamentable result of famines,—a ghastly tale of deaths. They very reverse of this has been the case in every other province of India not permanently settled. The agricultural people are so resourceless and impoverished, that the most liberal relief measures have failed to save lives; and the uniform story of deaths by the million has been told in every famine year. These are facts that tell their own tale. Within a period of over a hundred years there has been no famine in permanently settled Bengal causing loss of life; while loss of life has been lamentable and frequent in every other province of India in spite of all relief operations. The contention, therefore, that the permanent settlement has saved Bengal from the worst results of famines is not disproved, but proved by history, as completely and unanswerably as any economic fact can be proved.

But it has been urged in the second place that the comparative prosperity of the Bengal cultivators is due not to the permanent settlement but to later legislation, *i. e.* to the Rent Act passed between 1859 and 1885. I myself rendered some humble assistance in the framing of the Rent Act of 1885, and my services on the occasion were kindly acknowledged in the *Calcutta Gazette* by the then Revenue Secretary of Bengal, Mr. Antony MacDonnell, now Sir Antony MacDonnell, the most distinguished Indian administrator of the present generation. I shall be the last person, therefore, to deny that the Rent Acts of Bengal were needed for the protection of cultivators, or that they completed the good work done by the permanent settlement. But to maintain that the

permanent settlement did no good until the Rent Acts were passed is to discredit the testimony of the ablest officers and the most distinguished statesmen who lived and worked in India during three generations. Their recorded opinions have been quoted on my work on the *Economic History of British India*, which is expected to appear next month, and need not be fully recapitulated here. There were men among them like Colebrooke, who had served in India for over forty years, who had known Bengal before the permanent settlement and after, and who declared in 1808 (long before the Rent Acts were passed) that "the reviving prosperity of the country, its increased wealth and rapid improvements are unquestionably due to the permanent settlement." There were thoughtful observers like Bishop Heber who wrote in 1826 (long before the Rent Acts) that "in Bengal where independent of its exuberant fertility there is a permanent settlement, famine is unknown." Lord William Bentinck, as Governor of Madras, recommended a permanent Ryotwari settlement ; and Sir Thomas Munro insisted on this all through his life, and stated before the House of Commons that there was no difference between the Zemindari settlement of Bengal and the Ryotwari settlement of Madras as regards permanency. One Governor-General, the Marquis of Wellesley, was so convinced of the benefits of the permanent settlement that he pledged the word of the British Government, in 1803 and 1805, by Legislative Acts and Proclamations, to extend it to Northern India. His successor Lord Minto recorded his opinion in 1813 that "to ameliorate generally the

conditions of the natives, it is our firm conviction that no arrangement or measure will tend so speedily and effectually to the accomplishment of those important objects as the establishment of a permanent settlement." Lord Minto's successor, the Marquis of Hastings, once more urged in 1820, that "it is, then, our unanimous opinion that the system of a permanent settlement of the land revenue, either upon the principle of a fixed *jumma*, or of an assessment determinable by a fixed and invariable rate, ought to be extended to the ceded and conquered Provinces." The Directors of the East India Company rejected the proposals of the three successive Governor-Generals, and broke the pledge given by Legislative Acts and Proclamations, not because the permanent settlement in Bengal had borne no fruit, but because a trading Company would sacrifice nothing of their own prospective profits and dividends for the happiness of the people of India. The Company was abolished in 1858; the first Bengal Rent Act was passed by Lord Canning in 1859; and the same Viceroy urged once more the extension of a permanent settlement to all provinces of India for the prevention of such famines as he had witnessed in Northern India in 1860. Sir Charles Wood, then Secretary of State for India, (afterwards Lord Halifax) accepted the proposal and described it as "a measure dictated by sound policy, and calculated to accelerate the development of the resources of India, and to ensure in the highest degree, the welfare and contentment of all classes of Her Majesty's subjects in that country." Sir John Lawrence, (afterwards Lord

Lawrence) wrote in the same year, "I recommend a perpetual settlement, because I am persuaded that however much the country has of late years improved, its resources will be still more rapidly developed by the limitation of the Government demand." And Sir Stafford Northcote, Secretary of State for India, approved of the proposal in 1867 "in consideration of the great importance of connecting the interests of the proprietors of the land with the stability of the British Government."

Such were the opinions of three generations of distinguished administrators and able statesmen in India, — of men who built up the Empire, and valued the contentment and happiness of the people. But unfortunately, the desire to promote the welfare of the people did not ultimately shape the action of the Government; the desire to conciliate the people lost its force when the empire became stable; the desire to continuously add to the land revenue prevailed; and the proposal of extending the permanent settlement into all provinces of India was rejected by the India Office in 1883.

Since then the Indian Government have tried to persuade themselves, and to persuade others, that the permanent settlement is a useless and a hurtful institution. English landed proprietors, who themselves enjoy and appreciate the benefits of a permanent settlement in England under Pitt's Act of 1798, learn to repeat, when they arrive in India, that what is good for themselves is not good for the people of India. Young men, fresh from schools, when they come out as

administrators to India, learn to sneer at the opinions of Cornwallis and Sir Thomas Munro, of Wellesley and Lord Hastings, of Canning and Lawrence, of Lord Halifax and Sir Stafford Northcote, as the "school of thought" of an earlier period which is now out of date and out of fashion. And the people of India are asked to believe, with all the eloquence of official persuasion, that the grapes which are now placed beyond their reach are sour, and that they will thrive best under a continuous increase of the State demand from the soil. All this is very intelligible, however sad. But the impartial student of history will occasionally turn from the made-to-order opinions of modern times to the freer discussions of past generations; to the opinions of men who watched the operation of the permanent settlement from the earliest period, judged its merit from the highest stand point, viz. that of the happiness of the people of India, and recommended its extension with greater freedom than has been enjoyed by any Viceroy since 1883.

*Remedies proposed in the memorial of 1900.*—But as has been stated before, the question of a permanent settlement does not arise in the present discussion. The extension of the permanent settlement to other provinces of India was not urged in my Open Letters to Lord Curzon; and it was not recommended in the Memorial submitted to the Secretary of State for India in 1900. The Memorialists made some exceedingly moderate proposals for placing reasonable limits on the land tax, limits which are consistent with the present land policy

of the India Office and the Indian Government. The proposals were: (1) Half net produce rule for cultivators paying the land-tax direct. (2) Half rental rule for landlords paying the land tax. (3) Thirty years settlement rule. (4) Limitation of enhancements from cultivators to the ground of increase in prices. (5) Limitation of cesses to 10 per cent. of the land revenue.

With your permission I propose to examine on a future occasion, how far Lord Curzon has found it possible to accept these proposals, and on what points His Excellency has not found it possible to adopt them.

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## XV. SECOND REPLY TO LORD CURZON'S LAND RESOLUTION.

[*Appeared in the "Pioneer," March 28, 1902.*]

SIR—In my last letter which appeared in your issue of the 12th March, I made mention of the five rules which were suggested in the memorial of 1900, to limit the land tax within reasonable and intelligible limits. I propose in the present letter briefly to examine how these rules have been dealt with in the Government Resolution.

(1) *Half net produce from cultivators.*—The first rule suggested by the memorialists was worded thus : "Where the land revenue is paid directly by the cultivators, as in most parts of Madras and Bombay, the Government demand should be limited to 50 per cent of the value of the net produce after a liberal deduction for cultivation expenses has been made, and should not ordinarily exceed one-fifth of the gross produce even in those parts of the country where in theory one-half the net is assumed to approximate to one-third the gross produce."

The first part of the rule, limiting the Government demand to one-half the net produce, is based on Sir Charles Wood's despatch of 1864, and is accepted, in theory, by the Madras Government. "It is now forty years," says Lord Curzon's Resolution, "since the alternative standard of half the net produce was

introduced in Madras." The Memorialists, therefore, suggested no new rule, but only recommended that the accepted rule should be fairly and universally worked wherever the land tax was paid by the cultivators direct. In Bombay, no endeavours are made to limit the land tax to one-half the net produce; in Madras the calculations are often so made that, according to the testimony of many revenue officers, the land tax approximates sometimes to the whole of the net produce. What the Memorialists urged was that the rule, accepted in theory, should be strictly and universally carried out in practice; and that the cultivator should be saved, in every single case, from an assessment exceeding one-half the net produce of his field. His Excellency the Viceroy must feel, as strongly as we do, that such protection is needed by each individual cultivator; but nevertheless the Government Resolution provides no such protection, and leaves the incidence of the land tax on the peasant proprietors of Madras and Bombay as uncertain as before.

The second part of the rule quoted was meant as a further limit, and provides that the land tax, estimated at half the net produce, should not exceed the maximum of one-fifth the gross produce. Lord Curzon has declined to adopt this limit also, and deals with the proposal in these words: "The gross produce standard recommended by the Memorialists would, if systematically applied, lead to an increase of assessment all round. The Report from the Central Provinces shows that the proportion to produce of the gross rental ranges from one-sixth to

one-fourteenth, and that the enforcement of any such standard would double the liabilities of the raiyats. The Bengal Report gives statistical reasons for believing that rents are generally much below one-fifth of the gross produce, and indicates that raiyats on Government temporarily settled estates are, judged by this standard better off than under proprietors with a permanent settlement. The Madras reply says that 'if Government took one-fifth of the real gross produce from its raiyats, it would fully double its present land revenue. The Governor-General in Council is unable to accept a proposal which could only have consequences the very opposite of those which are anticipated by its authors.'

The reference to the tenants of private landlords in Bengal and the Central Provinces is out of place, because the rule framed by the Memorialists was intended for tracts "where the land revenue is paid directly by the cultivators, as in most parts of Madras and Bombay." Tenants of private landlords are protected by the Rent Acts of the different provinces, and the more complete the protection, the more thorough will be the support which those Acts will receive from all true well-wishers of Indian cultivators. In the rule now under consideration the Memorialists explicitly confined themselves to the cases of the cultivators who paid the land tax direct to Government, and it is a matter of regret that the rule framed by them has been completely misapprehended by Government. For the Memorialists did not suggest one-fifth the gross produce as the standard of land tax; they suggested it as the maximum which should never

he exceeded. As far back as 1883, one-fourth the gross produce was suggested as the maximum rent payable by Bengal raiyats to their private landlords, and in reducing this proportion to one-fifth Sir Antony MacDonnell, then Revenue Secretary of Bengal, recorded the following remarks: "It was never pretended that all landlords were justified in claiming one-fourth of the produce as rent, or that the proportion should be looked on otherwise than as the farthest limit which under circumstances most favourable to the landlord his claims might reach. ...The result of the information collected by these officers was to induce the Lieutenant-Governor to advocate the substitution of one-fifth for one-fourth of the gross produce in the Tenancy Bill now before the Legislative Council of India." The Memorialists had this rule before them when they framed a similar rule for tenants paying direct to Government; and in suggesting the maximum of one-fifth the produce, they did not pretend that "the proportion should be looked on otherwise than as the farthest limit which under circumstances most favourable" to the Government, its claim might reach.

As a matter of fact, Government very often exceeds this limit. It was in evidence before the Famine Commission of 1880 that the land tax in some Talukas in Madras was as high as 31 per cent. of the gross produce; and the Madras Board of Revenue now explains that this high rate referred to a small area, and that "a truer idea is given by the figures 12 to 28 per cent." It was in evidence before the Famine Commission of 1900 that

the land tax in some districts of Gujerat was 20 per cent. of the gross produce; and it is obvious, therefore, that this full rate must have been exceeded in many particular villages and Talukas in those districts. The object of the Memorialists was to prevent such excessive assessments in any single case. Their intention was that the land tax, necessarily varying according to the different qualities of the soil, should in no case exceed 20 per cent. of the gross produce. They hoped that the maximum limit proposed by Sir Antony MacDonnell for the tenants of the Bengal zemindars would be fixed by the Government for rayats paying the land tax to the State direct. The Government has misapprehended this suggested rule; has described the evil consequences of another rule which the Memorialists did not propose; and has declined to place any maximum limit on the land tax payable by cultivators. I deplore this decision. It was eagerly hoped that the revelations made by the Famine Commissions of 1880 and 1901 would induce Lord Curzon to place some clear, workable, intelligible maximum limit on the State demand from the present proprietors of India. Not only is it necessary that Revenue and Settlement Officers should be moderate in their demands, but it is also necessary—in India more than in any other country in the world,—that the cultivators should know and understand clearly what the State demands, and what they are entitled to keep. Uncertainty in the State demand paralyses agriculture. And this fatal uncertainty will hang on the agricultural industry of India until some future ruler, in closer touch with the people and

with a firmer determination to protect them at all costs, will declare to them in language which they can understand, how much the Government claims from the produce of their fields, and how much is assured to them, untouched by the Settlement and the Revenue Officer.

(2) *Half the rental from landlords.*—The second rule suggested by the Memorialists was thus worded ; “Where the land revenue is paid by landlords, the principle adopted in the Saharanpur rules of 1855, whereby the revenue demand is limited to one-half of the actual rent or assets of such landlords, should be universally applied.” Rule XXXVI of the Saharanpur Rule laid down that “the Government have determined so far to modify the rule laid down in para. 52 of the Directions to Settlement Officers as to limit the demand of State to 50 per cent or one-half of the average net assets.” Revenue Officers have from time to time sought to place on these clear words an interpretation which they do not bear on the face of them ; and have sought to realise as land revenue one-half of the prospective and potential rental of estates. Mr. J. B. Fuller, who was Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces in 1887 described such procedure (in his letter of the 18th May, 1887) as an attempt “to evade the operation of the half-assets rule.” By his singular ability and talents, as well as by his unsurpassed experience in settlement work, Mr. J. B. Fuller has deservedly won the high rank which he now occupies. But alas ! one of the first duties of his high office has been an attempt to justify in 1902 what he himself described in 1887 as an evasion of a Government

rule by Government officers. As Secretary to the Government of India, he signs Lord Curzon's Resolution, and he writes that "the construction placed on the word assets at the time, and for many years later, permitted the Settlement Officer to look beyond the actual cash rental, and to take into consideration prospective increases of income." I would not like to compare these words too closely with what Mr. Fuller wrote in 1887. It is pleasanter to know that the old practice, whether an evasion of rules or a misapprehension of them, has now been abandoned. Lord Curzon proceeds to say :—

"In the North-Western and other zemindari provinces prospective assets have been excluded from consideration. . . . In the resettlement of Oudh, now on the point of completion, the average falls below 47 per cent. . . . Already as pointed out in the Report from the Central Provinces three of the districts in the whole of the Provinces have recently been reassessed . . . at less than 50 per cent. of the rental . . . In Orissa the gradual reduction of the government proportion has been even more striking. In 1822 it was authoritatively declared to be 83·3 of the assets, in 1833 it was lowered to 70·75 per cent., in 1840 to 65 per cent. with a permissive reduction to 60 per cent., while in the resettlement just concluded it has been brought down to 54 per cent."

I can scarcely flatter myself that His Excellency meant the last words as a compliment to me personally : but I may say, in passing, that the last resettlement of Orissa went on under my supervision in 1896 ; and that my recommendations were before the Government when the

settlement was finally concluded in 1897. Generally speaking, the Government of India recognises the rule proposed in the Memorial without formally laying it down. "While the standard of 50 per cent. has nowhere been laid down as a fixed and immutable prescription, there has been and there is, a growing tendency throughout temporarily settled zemindari districts to approximate to it." The Memorialists may feel satisfied that this virtually proclaims the abandonment of the practice of assessing estates on prospective rentals, or at over half the rental; and they are grateful for this to Lord Curzon.

(3) *Settlements for thirty years.*—The third rule suggested by the Memorialists was thus worded: "That no revision of the land tax of any province or part thereof should be made within thirty years of the expiration of any former revision." The name of Lord William Bentinck is honoured in India for doing away with short settlements and introducing settlements for thirty years. The great settlement of Northern India, effected between 1833 and 1849 was for thirty years. The first great settlement of Bombay, effected in 1837 was for thirty years. Settlements made in Madras have been for thirty years during over half a century. The Orissa settlement of 1837 was for thirty years, and when the period expired in 1867, Lord Lawrence, then Viceroy of India, continued the old settlement for another thirty years instead of harassing the people with a fresh settlement in the year of the Orissa famine. The advantages of long settlements are obvious. In spite of all precau-

tions, every re-settlement is a harassment of the people ; short settlements take away all motives for improvement ; long settlements give some assurance and encouragement to the people, and promote enterprise in the landed classes. These facts were forgotten or ignored in the last years of the 19th century ; and in 1895, Lord George Hamilton ruled that while thirty years should continue to be the ordinary term of settlement in Madras, Bombay, and the N. W. Provinces, twenty years should be the general rule for the Punjab and the Central Provinces. Against this ungenerous departure from a healthy rule I raised my voice in my Open Letter to Lord Curzon on the Central Provinces ; and it is against this departure that the rule proposed by the Memorialists is meant to be a protest. The Government Resolution defends this departure in the following words ; "Where the land is fully cultivated, rents fair, and agricultural production not liable to violent oscillations, it is sufficient if the demands of Government are re-adjusted once in thirty years, *i. e.* once in the lifetime of each generation. Where the opposite conditions prevail, where there are much waste land, low rents and a fluctuating cultivation, or again where there is a rapid development of resources owing to the construction of roads, railways, or canals, to an increase of population or to a rise in prices, the postponement of resettlement for so long a period is both injurious to the people who are unequal to the strain of a sharp enhancement, and unjust to the general tax-payer who is temporarily deprived of the additional revenue to which he has legitimate claim."

A moment's examination will show that this defence of Lord George Hamilton's action of 1895 is unsound. The Punjab and the Central Provinces were not less fully cultivated and not less developed in 1895, after half a century of British rule, than the Bombay Province was in 1837, after twenty years of British rule, or the N. W. Provinces were in 1833, after thirty years of British rule. It is possible that the Government of India sees this ; for the closing sentence of Lord Curzon's Resolution on this subject is hopeful. His Excellency writes : "Whether these considerations justifying a shorter term of settlement than thirty years apply with sufficient force to the Punjab and the Central Provinces at the present time, and if they do apply at the present time, whether the force of their application will diminish with the passage of time, are weighty questions to which careful attention will be given by the Government of India upon suitable occasions." The last words inspire me with hope : and if Lord Curzon succeeds, before laying down his office, to extend the thirty years' rule to the Punjab and the Central Provinces, His Excellency will have satisfied the Memorialists, and earned the gratitude of millions of cultivators in those Provinces.

(4) *Limitation of enhancements from cultivators* — The fourth rule proposed by the Memorialists was thus worded : "Where the land-revenue is paid by the cultivators direct to the Government, there should be no increase in the assessment except in cases where the land has increased in value (1) in consequence of im-

provements in irrigation works carried out at the expense of the Government, or (2) on account of a rise in the value of produce based on the average prices of the thirty years next preceding such revision "

The object of the Memorialists was to define the grounds on which the land tax paid direct by cultivators would be enhanced. As between private landlords and their tenants the Rent Acts of Bengal lay down clearly and definitely the grounds of enhancement, and Courts of Justice will allow no enhancement of rent except on those specific grounds. As between the State and the peasant proprietors no such definite grounds of enhancement of the land tax are laid down, and no appeal to Courts of Justice is allowed. The result is that the cultivators paying the land tax live in a state of perpetual uncertainty, they do not know on what grounds the State will claim an enhancement at the next settlement, they do not comprehend to what extent the enhancement will be made. As I am writing these lines, I find from the reply of a Member of the Madras Council that in the recent Malabar settlement, the assessment was raised 85 per cent. at Palghat, 55 per cent. at Calicut, 84 per cent. at Kurumbranad, and 105 per cent. at Walāvanad. Such enhancements, made on grounds which the cultivators never fully comprehend, must deaden agricultural enterprise, and keep the cultivating population in a state of chronic poverty.

As far back as 1882, the Marquis of Ripon endeavoured to remove this uncertainty, and made a rule, with the concurrence of the Madras Government, that

in districts which had been surveyed and settled, there should be no increase in the land revenue, except on the equitable ground of a rise in prices. Lord Ripon left India in December, 1884, and in January, 1885, the India Office cancelled his rule and plunged the tenantry of India once more into a state of uncertainty. It was the object of the Memorialists to remove this deadening uncertainty ; to place the tenants of the State in the same position in which the tenants of private landlords have been placed ; and to let them know the clear and definite grounds on which the State claimed an enhancement of the revenue at resettlements. They therefore framed a rule similar to Lord Ripon's rule, and they hoped and believed that Lord Curzon would see the necessity of extending to the cultivators, paying revenue to the State, something of that protection which has been extended by law to cultivators, paying rents to private landlords. Lord Curzon's decision on this point is disappointing.

"To deny the right of the State" writes Lord Curzon "to a share in any increase in values except those which could be inferred from the general table of price statistics, in itself a most fallacious and partial test, would be to surrender to a number of individuals an increment which they had not themselves earned."

This decision is disappointing. Increase in values is indicated by the table of prices. Lord Ripon's rule suggested, and the rule framed by the Memorialists also suggested, that the Government should obtain an enhancement of revenues when there was such increase in prices. And

they reasonably urged that the Government should claim no increase when prices had not increased. All the real advantages which the cultivator secures from new roads or lines of railway are shown in a rise in prices. I was a District Officer in Midnapur ten years ago, when there was no railway line in the District. I am writing the present letter from the same place, which is the now connected by rail with Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras. And prices have increased owing to this connection. A high official who has been here all these years informs me that rice was selling at 16 seers the rupee ten years ago, and is now selling at 12½ seers the rupee. When such increase takes place in temporarily settled tracts, it is a legitimate ground for enhancement of revenue at the next settlement. When no such increase has taken place, the cultivators have derived no advantages; and to claim an increase of revenue at a settlement is to drive them deeper into debt and poverty. And not to define, clearly and intelligibly, the grounds on which the State is entitled to an increase of revenue from lands, is the most efficacious method that human ingenuity could devise for keeping them eternally in the gloom of uncertainty and the slough of despond.

• (5) *Limitation of Cesses.*—The fifth and last rule proposed by the Memorialists was worded thus: "That a limit be fixed in each Province, beyond which it may not be permissible to surcharge the land tax with local cesses. We are of opinion that the Bengal rate of 6¼ per cent. is a fair one; and that in no cases should the rate exceed to ten per cent."

In my Open Letter to Lord Curzon on the Central Provinces, I made the mistake of stating that local cases amounting to  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. were assessed on the rental. The Government Resolution on the Nagpur Settlement, published a year ago, corrected my mistake, and pointed out that the cesses amounting to  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. were assessed on the revenue, and therefore came to about  $6\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. on the rental. The Memorialists had the facts and figures for Bengal, Madras, Bombay and other provinces before them, but their rule is somewhat obscurely worded. What they meant was that in a permanently settled province like Bengal, where the cesses are imposed on the rental, the rate of  $6\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. on the rental is fair; and that in temporarily settled provinces, like Bombay, Madras and the N.-W. Provinces, the cesses, calculated on the land revenue, should not exceed ten per cent. of the land revenue. The decision of the Government in this subject is stated in the following words, and gives us some grounds for hope:—

“The general conclusion of the Government of India is that there is no reason for thinking that local taxation if properly distributed is on the whole either onerous or excessive. But there are grounds for suspecting that the distribution is often unfair. . . . The question presents itself whether it is not better, as opportunities occur, to mitigate imposts which are made to press upon the cultivating classes more severely than the law intended. The Government of India would be glad to see their way to offer such relief.”

I have now travelled over the entire ground covered

by the Memorial, and have shewn how the five proposals made therein have been dealt with by the Government. Lord Curzon has approached the subject with a statesmanlike conviction of its importance. He has virtually affirmed the principle, which we urged, that in temporarily settled estates held by landlords, the Government revenue should generally be limited to one-half the *actual* rental. He has given us hopes that the rule of thirty years settlement, which we urged, will be extended to the Punjab and the Central Provinces. And he has also given us hopes that the pressure of local cesses will be mitigated. If to all this His Excellency had added some clear and workable limits to the Government demand in Ryotwari tracts, and defined some intelligible and equitable grounds for enhancement of revenue in such tracts, the Government Resolution would have given to millions of cultivators the assurance and the protection they need so much. The subject is one of national importance, and not one for sectional controversy. Personally, I have never written or spoken on the subject, and I will never write or speak on the subject, merely to carry on an idle debate or to prolong a needless controversy. I have felt, and I feel, that the happiness and well-being of an agricultural nation largely depend on some clear, definite, intelligible, and workable limits being placed on the land tax in Ryotwari tracts, as limits have been placed on Zemindari tracts by the Saharanpur rules. And the land question in India will not be solved, and India will know no rest, till this is done.

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## XVI. THIRD REPLY TO LORD CURZON'S LAND RESOLUTION.

[*Appeared in the "Hindu" March 29, 1902.*]

ON landing at Madras, last month, I saw for the first time the Viceroy's famous Resolution on the Indian Land Revenue, published in January last. And while I sincerely appreciated the courtesy which distinguished that document, I was unable to agree in many of the conclusions to which His Excellency had arrived. The ground covered by the Resolution, however, was so vast that I found it impossible to touch on all the points within the limits of my previous letters. I propose in the present letter to deal with some remarkable statements which have found a place in the Resolution and with some remedial measures which Lord Curzon had announced.

*Famines and the Land Revenue.*—The Governor-General in Council is unable to accept the theory that : "Were the assessments diminished, famine would be less frequent, or that at least when they do occur, they would cause infinitely less suffering." And yet if we take entire provinces and large tracts of country into consideration, this theory is proved beyond a question. Permanently settled Bengal is lightly taxed, and has known no famine attended with loss of life since 1793. Madras and Bombay under the Ryotwari system bear a heavier and more uncertain land-tax,

and the worst famines during the last quarter of the century have been in Madras and Bombay. The Central Provinces had its assessment enormously increased at the last Settlement, and suffered from a desolating famine with a few years. In Northern India the cruel land assessments of the early years of the 19th century were reduced by Bentinck and Dalhousie, and famines within the present generation have been less fatal than those of 1837 and 1860. No statesman outside India questions the theory that moderate taxation helps the people, and heavy taxation impoverishes them. We all hope that Lord Curzon will take his place as a statesman in England after he retires from India; and if he does not accept a peerage, he will seek the votes of some constituency to enter the Parliament again. Will His Excellency promise his constituents that he will keep up a heavy rate of taxation, because, according to his Indian theory, heavy taxes do not interfere with the prosperity of the people? It would be interesting to watch the result of the Election.

But let us confine ourselves to India. If moderating the taxes and rents does not improve the condition and the staying power of the people, what was the object of the long line of statesmen from the time of Munro and Elphinstone in pressing for moderation? Why did Lord William Bentinck reduce the land revenue to two-thirds the rental, and Lord Dalhousie reduce it further to one-half the rental, if such reduction was a needless and foolish sacrifice of the Government revenue? Why did Lord Canning place restrictions on enhancements by

private landlords in Bengal, and why has that policy been followed by Rent Acts in every province of India, if it is a useless loss to landlords and does not benefit the tenants? British legislation has striven since 1859 to place equitable and intelligible limits on the power of private landlords to enhance rents; and yet the moment we propose such limits on the power of the State in provinces where the State is virtually the landlord, a cry is raised in the official world, and even the Viceroy permits the statement to find a place in his Resolution that to diminish assessments would not promote the prosperity and the staying power of the people.

*Money-lenders and the land revenue.* Another fallacy which has found place in the Resolution is this: "Neither in the past nor in the present circumstances of the country can any warrant be found for the belief that the revenue so relinquished by Government would constitute a famine relief fund in the hands of the people. Experience has shewn that excessive leniency of the kind in question reacts prejudicially upon the industry of the agricultural classes, while it encourages the transfer of soil to moneylenders and middlemen."

The experience of every revenue officer in Bengal directly contradicts this theory. Within my memory,—within the last 43 years since the first Rent Act was passed in Bengal,—the indebtedness of the Bengal cultivators and the power of the moneylenders have decreased in consequence of the provisions against the undue enhancement of rents; and this has been so even in Behar since the passing of the last Rent Act. It is

excessive assessment and rigorous collection, not leniency, which drive the cultivators to serfdom under moneylenders, and this is proved by the report of the last Famine Commission.

In 1876 a cyclone and storm-wave destroyed the crops of many districts in Eastern Bengal, and I was sent as a Sub-Divisional officer to an island which had suffered the most. I knew that the people had no food, and I was prepared to open relief operations when needed, without acting in haste. What was my surprise when I found that the people needed no relief and asked for none ! The cultivators had paid light rents for years before, and had invested all their savings in silver jewellery for their women, and in other valuable articles. In the year of disaster they sold their silver things, bought shiploads of imported rice, and helped themselves till the next harvest. A small number of orphans and helpless old men who had lost their relations by the cyclone were relieved ; the mass of the people supported themselves through the crisis. What was this silver jewellery of the cultivators but "a famine relief fund in the hands of the people?" And if the State treats its ryots in Madras and Bombay as leniently as the private landlords treat their cultivators in Eastern Bengal, the ryots of Madras and Bombay would naturally have "a famine relief fund" in their own hands, in some shape or other, for years of drought and distress. For the ryots of Bombay and Madras are not less thrifty and provident, but notoriously more so, than the cultivators of Eastern Bengal. But the State virtually repeats the words of the landlords of the old school :—"Squeeze

the tenants well in order to prevent them, poor things, from getting into bad ways!"

*Native Rule and the Land Revenue.* Another fallacy which has found place in Lord Curzon's Resolution is that the defects of the present Land Revenue system of India are inherited from the old Native Rule. "The Government of India," says the Resolution, "would not desire to claim for the Land Revenue system of British India an exactitude or freedom from blemish to which it cannot pretend. Historically, it owes its immediate origin to practices inherited from the most decadent period of Native Rule."

The decadent period of Native Rule has many sins to answer for; but in respect of over-assessment of the soil, the East India Company were the worst sinners. This is abundantly manifest from the Blue Books and official records of the early years of the 19th century which I have summarized in my *Economic History of British India*, and need not recapitulate here. It is in evidence that the Company's servants swept aside Village Communities, Jaigirdars, and Polygars, in order to come in direct touch with the cultivators, and they raised a land revenue such as was never known in India before. In Bengal the actual collection during the last three years of the Nawab's administration varied between six and nine million Rupees; in the first year after the Company obtained the Dewani, they screwed up the revenue to nearly 15 million Rupees; and in less than thirty years they made it 27 millions, by 1793. In Bombay the revenue of the territories acquired from

the last Peshwa in 1817 was increased within a few years from 8 millions to 15 millions of Rupees. In Madras, the Company's servants were actually taking about half the produce of the field as *Land Tax* at the very time when, according to the testimony of Dr. Francis Buchanan, private landlords in Bengal were taking less than one-fourth the produce as *Rent*. And in Northern India, the land revenue of the Districts ceded by the Nawab of Oudh in 1801 was raised from 13½ million Rupees to 17 million Rupees in three years.

This policy of continuously screwing up the land revenue to a higher figure than was ever known in India before under any Native Rule, was steadily pursued by the Company's servants under the sanction of the Company's Directors ; and all thoughtful and moderate Englishmen of the time deplored the policy. Verelst, Governor of Bengal, replied in 1768 to the Director's fresh demands for increase by stating that : "It is totally beyond the power of your administration to make any material addition to your rents." Warren Hastings reported in 1772 that : "Notwithstanding the loss of at least one-third of the inhabitants of that province (Bengal) and the consequent decrease of the cultivation, the nett collections of the year 1771 exceeded even those of 1768." Colebrooke, writing in 1808, protested against "grasping at the highest revenue and wringing from our peasants the utmost rent." The Madras Board of Revenue raised its voice in 1818 against "binding the ryot by force to the plough, compelling him to till land acknowledged to be overassessed, dragging him

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back if he absconded, \* \* taking from him all that could be obtained." Bishop Heber, writing in 1826 said : "The peasantry in the Company's Provinces are, on the whole, worse off, poorer, and more dispirited than the subjects of the Native Princes;" and that "no Native Prince demands the rent which we do." Lieutenant Colonel Briggs, writing in 1830 said that : "A Land Tax like that which now exists in India, professing to absorb the whole of the landlord's rent, was never known under any Government in Europe or Asia." Robert M. Bird, the Father of Land Settlement of Northern India, said before the House of Commons in 1832, that : "In Madras and other places\* \* the revenue was fixed too high at the beginning, and impoverishes the people." And the Hon'ble Mr. Shore, writing in 1837 said : "Every successive province, as it has fallen into our possession, has been made a field for higher exaction ; and it has always been our boast how greatly we have raised our revenue above that which the Native Rulers were able to extort."

*Protection needed in Madras and Bombay.* Much has been done to remedy these abuses since the early years of the Company's Rule. Bengal was saved by the Permanent Settlement. Northern India obtained some relief from Lord W. Bentinck's two-third-rental rule, and subsequently from Lord Dalhousie's half-rental rule. The cultivators of Bengal obtained protection from Lord Canning's Rent Act of 1859, and the tenants of private landlords in the different provinces of India have obtained similar protection from the Rent Acts of the different

provinces. But it is a remarkable and a lamentable fact that the Government has not granted to the peasant proprietors of Madras and Bombay the protection which it has granted to the tenants of private landlords under these Rent Acts. The Bengal ryot knows and understands the clear and definite grounds on which his Zemindar may claim an enhancement. The Bombay and Madras ryot does not know and does not understand the grounds on which the State will claim an enhancement at the next revised settlement. The Bengal ryot can reckon beforehand the limits of the Zemindar's claims. The Madras and Bombay ryot cannot calculate beforehand what the Settlement Officer's claims will be. The Bengal ryot can appeal to Civil Courts against unjust claims on the part of his landlord. The Madras and Bombay ryot is allowed no appeal to any independent tribunal against the mistakes of the Settlement or Revenue officer. Certainty and definiteness in the rental make the Bengal ryot confident in his own rights and prompt him to save. Uncertainty and indefiniteness in the State-demand at each revised settlement demoralize the Madras and Bombay ryot and take away from the motive to save. We had hoped that Lord Curzon would on the present occasion introduce some definite rules and limits on the enhancement of revenue in Madras and Bombay, (as Lord Ripon did in 1882), so as grant to the Madras and Bombay ryot the protection and the assurance which the Bengal ryot enjoys. Lord Curzon has allowed the opportunity to pass, and has not granted the needed protection.

The land question in India will know no satisfactory solution until some future ruler, more in touch with the people, and more truly realizing the position of the cultivating population, will grant to the Madras and Bombay ryot that assurance and protection which the Bengal ryot enjoys, and without which agricultural prosperity is impossible in any country in the world.

*Protection granted by Lord Curzon.* Three remedial measures are proposed by Lord Curzon. They are (1) progressive and gradual imposition of large enhancements; (2) greater elasticity in the revenue collection; (3) reduction of assessments in case of local deterioration. These remedies are excellent, so far as they go, but they do not go far enough. They will obviate temporary hardship, but will not promote the prosperity of an agricultural nation. Large enhancements should certainly be progressively imposed when made;—but they should *not* be made at all except on these clear grounds and under those strict rules which the Government has provided in the case of private landlords. In the recent Malabar Settlement, the assessment has been raised 85 per cent. at Palghat, 55 per cent. at Calicut, 84 per cent. at Kurumbranad, and 105 per cent. at Walavanad. Private landlords in Bengal stand amazed at these enormous enhancements, and ask themselves under which of the prescribed grounds in the Bengal Rent Act they could induce Courts of Justice to grant them such enhancements of the rental from their ryots! And it is quite clear that if such enhancements are permissible in Madras and

Bombay, on the opinion of the Settlement Officer, the condition of cultivators can never be other than one of perpetual poverty and wretchedness. Greater elasticity in revenue *collection* is also necessary in hard times, but the revenue *assessment* should be light to enable cultivators to save in good years. To screw up the land-tax to the "full" amount, and then to allow remissions when harvests fail, is to keep cultivators always on the brink of famines and starvation. Lastly, the reduction of assessments in case of local deterioration is of course necessary, or the country will be depopulated ; but will no reduction be made except to prevent depopulation ?

The remedial measures proposed by Lord Curzon indicate the desperate condition of cultivators in Southern India, and the desperate cases in which the Government proposes to relieve them. Wiser statesmanship should go further, and should permanently improve the condition of the cultivators, should give them clear, definite and intelligible rights, and should provide them with a complete protection against enhancement except on clearly defined legal grounds. This is what Lord Canning's Act of 1859 and subsequent Rent Acts have done for the Bengal cultivator. This is what Lord Curzon's Resolution has failed to do for the Madras and Bombay cultivator.

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## XVII. FOURTH REPLY TO LORD CURZON'S LAND RESOLUTION.

[*Appeared in the Pioneer, April 7, 1902.*]

\* \* I THANK you for giving me this opportunity of explaining, as briefly as I could, the land policy of the Indian Government, and the reforms suggested by the Memorialists of 1900. After a century and a half of blundering, that policy has crystalised itself into one simple rule :— *The land revenue, where not permanently settled, shall not exceed one half the rental.* This maxim was laid down by the Saharanpur rule of 1855 for Northern India ; and it was laid down by the despatch of 1864 for Southern India. Half the rental is a heavy land-tax to pay, for in England, during the hundred years before Pitt's Permanent Settlement of 1798, the people paid a land tax of 1s to 4s in the pound, or 5 to 20 per cent. on the rental. But nevertheless, something will be gained if this half-rental rule is strictly and honestly adhered to in future. In Northern India the principle was departed from by a misinterpretation or evasion of the rule ; but we are thankful to Lord Curzon for clearly and definitely affirming the right principle again by stating "that assessments have ceased to be made upon prospective assets." If the land agitation of the past five years had borne no other fruit than this, still the agitation had not been in vain. In Madras, however, the half rental rule, or the half-net-produce rule, has been loosely worked, and in

some districts or villages or fields, virtually the whole of the economic rent is absorbed by the land revenue. And in Bombay, no endeavour is made to limit the land tax to half the net produce. If Lord Curzon had insisted on this rule being strictly adhered to in Southern India, and had provided cultivators with some efficacious and workable remedy against the land assessment exceeding half the net produce in the case of every particular Ryot, a great and troublesome question would have been solved, and the cultivators of India would have received that protection which they sorely need, and which they are entitled to under the British Rule.

These are the principles which I have urged during five years. My voice is weak against the voice of the Viceroy of India, supported by the Local Governments, and by an influential British press in England and in India. Nevertheless I am sustained in my endeavour by the thought that I am working for the right cause in pleading for moderation in land assessments, and asking for clear, definite, intelligible limits to the State demand, which will enable every humble cultivator to know beforehand what the claims of the Government will be at the next resettlement, and what he is entitled to keep out of the produce of his field for his wife and children. I feel assured that when the heat and turmoil of this controversy are over, all fair minded men will see that such definite limits are needed for the protection and prosperity of an agricultural nation. And Lord Curzon himself, when he retires from this country to take an honoured place in the British Cabinet, will feel more

gratification in the thought of what he has done to moderate, define, and limit the State demand in Northern India, than in the recollection of what he has *not* done to protect the cultivators of Southern India.

But let us look forward to a more remote future. Fifty years hence, the famines of the 19th century, the loss of Indian Industries, the blunders in Land Assessments, and the impoverishment of an agricultural nation, will not be a recreating subject of contemplation to our sons and grandsons, when we are dead and gone. Future administrators and legislators will bless every action now taken, and every word now spoken, to moderate taxation, to protect the peasantry from indefinite claims, and to promote the industries of the people. And when the British Empire itself will pass away in the fulness of time, may it leave some memories of the earlier blunders rectified ; of oppressive taxation moderated and lightened ; of industries revived ; of agriculture freed from excessive and uncertain State demands ; and of a frugal and industrious nation made prosperous and happy after a century of distress and famines.

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সংস্কৃত ও বাঙ্গালা গ্রন্থসমূহ ।

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